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## Student-athlete recruitment at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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STUDENT-ATHLETE RECRUITMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NEVADA, LAS VEGAS

by

Christi Smith DeWaele

Bachelor of Arts  
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill  
1996

Master of Science  
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1999

A dissertation in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

**Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Sports Education Leadership  
Department of Sports Education Leadership  
College of Education**

**Graduate College  
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at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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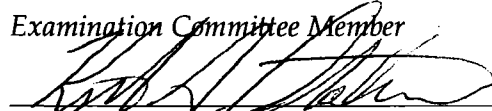
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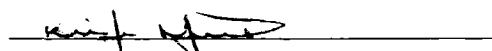
  
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## ABSTRACT

### **Student-Athlete Recruitment at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas**

by

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Dr. Monica Lounsbery, Examination Committee Chair  
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With the impact winning athletic teams have on a university it is not surprising that pressure to produce winning teams is enormous. Coaches are expected to recruit the most athletically talented players to provide the university with winning seasons (Letawsky, Palmer & Schneider, 2005). In order for institutions to bring in athletes who are able to excel academically and athletically, it is important for coaches to understand what characterizes the college selection process for student-athletes. Therefore, an important step in this regard would be to develop instrumentation to measure this process. Hence, the purpose of this study was to conduct pilot research to develop instrumentation in which the underlying structure of student-athletes' college selection processes could be better understood. The study took place at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) and in cooperation with the UNLV Athletic Department. Based on the literature and structured interviews with UNLV athletic coaches, administrators, and student-athletes, it was determined that the instrument should attempt to measure the following six

components: (a) relationship with coaching staff, (b) success of program, (c) personal achievement, (d) academics, (e) teammates, (f) and UNLV/Las Vegas. A 45-item instrument comprised of six components was developed and piloted. The field test of the instrument included 290 current UNLV student-athletes. Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was used to identify the components that comprise the instrument. PCA is often used in the early stages of research to gather information about the interrelationships among a set of variables (Pallant, 2005). Results of the PCA revealed 5 components that explained 68.45% of the variance. Further inspection of the data demonstrated difficulty in identifying unique relationships between items based on their loadings. The second PCA conducted resulted in a 2 component model, with 15 items explaining 43.6% of the variance. These items conceptually fit with one another, identifying the two major components (Relationship with Coach and Family Perceptions of UNLV/Las Vegas) in recruiting the current UNLV student-athletes. Independent samples T-test showed that there were no significant differences between current male and female UNLV student-athletes. However, ANOVA results showed significant differences between sports on both components.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background

With the impact winning athletic teams have on a university it is not surprising that the pressure to produce winning teams is enormous. Coaches are expected to recruit the most athletically talented players to provide the university with winning seasons (Letawsky, Palmer & Schneider, 2005). Recruiting student-athletes has become such an immense task in intercollegiate athletics that many teams at the Division I level have one person whose primary job is to focus on all aspects of recruiting. Their responsibilities include coordinating official visits, phone calls and letters, initial contact with athlete and parents, and school visit. In order for institutions to bring in quality athletes who are able to excel academically and athletically, it is important for the administrators, coaches, and recruiters to identify the factors that lead a student-athlete to attend a specific college or university.

The process of recruiting student-athletes has become an important part of intercollegiate athletics and is overseen by the governing body of intercollegiate sports, the National Intercollegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The rules provided by the NCAA are there to help level the playing field when it comes to recruitment efforts.

Critical to the successful recruiting process, Seleck (1984) found that recruiters must be aware of the needs and interests of the student-athlete. He emphasizes that there is a

lack of interest in students' needs, which becomes a roadblock in the recruiting process. Recruiters must also be sincere in their approaches to discovering what is truly important to the student-athlete. Recruiting is essentially the same among most sports, but when dealing with revenue producing sports (i.e., football, men and women's basketball) it can be even more competitive.

At UNLV, some coaches feel it is more difficult to recruit quality student-athletes due to the university's location. Settled in the tourist trap locals know as "The Strip", UNLV's coaches are forced to focus the attention of their recruits, as well as their parents, on other aspects of the intercollegiate experience at UNLV. While not all UNLV coaches view the city as a deterrent for potential student-athletes, many have expressed an interest in determining what attracts student-athletes to choose UNLV for their academic and athletic experience.

A successful college athletics program is dependent on the effective recruiting of both players and coaches. A good job of recruiting players does not guarantee a good team, but without good recruiting there is no hope for a good team (Rooney, 1987). Coaches not only need information about their future recruits, but also could benefit from information gathered from their current student-athletes having experienced the recruiting process. Identifying factors of influence in the recruiting process on intercollegiate student-athletes can assist UNLV coaches in this tedious process known as recruiting.

### Research Problem

There may be identifying factors which have influenced student-athletes' decision to attend UNLV. Being able to identify the influences that may impact recruiting efforts

using a valid and reliable instrument may help coaches and administrators improve or modify current recruiting efforts. Additionally, the study may point to important programs or facilities the university may need to consider in order to improve student-athlete recruitment efforts.

Due to a limited marketing budget for UNLV athletics, it is somewhat difficult to promote UNLV to potential student-athletes across the country. This study has the potential for identifying influences, not yet considered by the athletic department which will in turn, help market their sport and sport program. In many cases it is the coach, current, and former athletes that are the draw for some student-athletes. Using those resources to market your sport program could be cost-cutting as well as effective. Additionally, knowing what factors could be influential to the potential student-athlete could put the coach at an advantage when it comes to selling UNLV and their program.

#### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to conduct pilot research to validate an instrument designed to measure preliminary feedback on student-athlete recruitment efforts at UNLV's athletic department. In addition, data collected was also used to provide feedback to the athletic department relative to student-athletes' perceptions about (a) the university and the athletic department before and after being recruited, (b) critical factors influencing the decision making process, and (c) interactions with the coaching staff and existing team members.

### Research Question

This study intended to answer two questions. First, what items comprise a valid and reliable instrument to measures factors that influence student-athletes' decision making process? Second, what distinct factors influence the decision of student-athletes to attend UNLV?

### Significance

The intent of this study was to collect data in order to assess item and instrument characteristics. The data was used to identify items in need of revision or elimination, as well as to verify the number of characteristics which adequately measure the influences in student-athletes' decision to attend UNLV. The instrument was developed specifically to address the concerns of the UNLV coaches, staff, and student-athletes regarding recruiting. UNLV coaches were provided information on the factors that were most influential for student-athletes in their sport. This information could help coaches make the recruiting process a more meaningful experience for potential student-athletes. Having data based information regarding the influential factors of the recruiting process to UNLV can help coaches build on their strengths in recruiting or correct their weaknesses.

### Limiting Factors

#### *Scope*

The scope of this study was to develop and validate an instrument that will measure the influences in student-athletes' decision to attend UNLV. Based on discussions with

coaches, staff, and student-athletes in the UNLV Department of Athletics, interest was in developing a tool which could prove useful toward the enhancement of student-athlete recruitment. It was determined that an instrument should be developed and should attempt to capture information in the following areas: (a) relationship with coaching staff, (b) success of sport program, (c) personal achievement, (d) academics, (e) relationship with teammates and (f) UNLV campus/city of Las Vegas.

### *Assumptions*

The assumptions of the study are as follows:

1. Relationship with coaching staff, success of sport program, personal achievement, academics, relationship with teammates and UNLV campus/city of Las Vegas are salient influences in student-athletes' decision to attend UNLV.
2. Participants understood the meaning of the instrument items.
3. Participants were honest in their responses (e.g. participants read each item in its entirety and responded genuinely).
4. Exploratory factor analysis correctly identified items as belonging to factors, as well as the factors which should comprise the instrument.
5. The validated instrument will be able to highlight differences between those student-athletes that choose to attend from those that did not attend UNLV.

### *Limitations*

The limitations of the study are as follows:

1. The instrument was specifically designed for use in surveying UNLV student-athlete recruits. However, instrument data were collected from only those

student-athletes who chose to attend UNLV.

2. There may be high margins of error in attempting to measure perception.
3. Some sports had a small number of participants. More differences may have been found with larger sample sizes.
4. The study was conducted at UNLV, a Division I university, and results may not be applicable for other schools.
5. The study was conducted for the sole purpose of improving the recruitment efforts at UNLV.

#### Operational Definitions

1. Student-athlete – A student-athlete is a student whose enrollment was solicited by a member of the athletics staff or other representative of athletics interests with a view toward the student's ultimate participation in the intercollegiate athletics program. Any other student becomes a student-athlete only when the student reports for an intercollegiate squad that is under the jurisdiction of the athletics department, as specified in the NCAA Constitution, Section 3.2.4.6. A student is not deemed a student-athlete solely on the basis of prior high-school athletics participation (NCAA Division I Manual, 2005).
2. Prospective student-athlete – A prospective student-athlete ("prospect") is a student who has started classes for the ninth grade. In addition, a student who has not started classes for the ninth grade becomes a prospective student-athlete if the institution provides such an individual (or the individual's relatives or friends) any financial assistance or other benefits that the institution does not provide to prospective students



generally. An individual remains a prospective student-athlete until one of the following occurs (whichever is earlier):

- (a) The individual officially registers and enrolls in a minimum full-time program of studies and attends classes in any term of a four-year collegiate institution's regular academic year (excluding summer); or
- (b) The individual participates in a regular squad practice or competition at a four-year collegiate institution that occurs before the beginning of any term; or
- (c) The individual officially registers and enrolls and attends classes during the summer prior to initial enrollment and receives institutional athletics aid.
- (d) Recruiting – Recruiting is any solicitation of a prospect or a prospect's relatives [or legal guardian(s)] by an institutional staff member or by a representative of the institution's athletics interests for the purpose of securing the prospect's enrollment and ultimate participation in the institution's intercollegiate athletics program (NCAA Division I Manual, 2005).

3. Recruited student-athlete – Actions by staff members or athletics representatives that cause a prospective student-athlete to become a recruited student-athlete at that institution are:

- (a) Providing the prospect with an official visit
- (b) Having an arranged, in-person, off campus encounter with the prospect or the prospect's parent(s), relatives or legal guardian(s).

- (c) Initiating or arranging a telephone contact with the prospect, the prospect's relatives or legal guardian(s) on more than one occasion for the purpose of recruitment.
- (d) Issuing a National Letter of Intent or the institution's written offer of athletically related financial aid to the prospect (NCAA Division I Manual, 2005).

4. Junior College Transfer/Two year college transfer – A student who transfers to a member institution from a two-year college or from a branch school that conducts an intercollegiate athletics program must complete an academic year of residence unless the student meets the following eligibility requirements applicable to the division of which the certifying institution is a member. Further, a transfer student-athlete admitted after the 12<sup>th</sup> class day may not utilize that semester or quarter for the purpose of establishing residency program (NCAA Division I Manual, 2005).

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study of factors that influence student-athletes to choose one school over another may be important to coaches, recruiters, and intercollegiate athletic departments. Student-athlete recruitment is an extremely competitive business with top athletes in each sport having the final say as to where they will spend their college years. The business of student-athlete recruitment is one that can have a remarkable effect on a university Department of Athletics in a number of ways including, donations and visibility, as well as influence applications for undergraduate admissions. Grimes and Chressanthis (1993) studied the effect that athletic success has on endowments and alumni giving and found a positive relationship between overall winning percentages and donations. Toma and Cross (1998) found that significant success in intercollegiate athletics and the positive attention it produces has an influence in college student choice, particularly at the search stage when students submit college applications. Measuring factors that influence prospective student-athletes' decision of where to attend school may assist coaches and recruiters by providing insight about (a) athletes in specific to each sport, (b) effectiveness of current recruiting practices, and (c) program and/or facility deficiencies within the athletic department or university.

For any institution to remain competitive at the collegiate level, it must recruit the most athletically talented and academically eligible student-athletes possible

(Letawsky, Palmer & Schneider, 2005). For this to take place, it is imperative that coaches and administrators understand the expectations of student-athletes' targeted for recruitment.

While extensive research has been done on the school selection process for college students, as well as on the factors influencing the college choice process for student-athletes based on revenue producing sports (i.e., football and basketball), little research has focused on the factors influencing student-athletes in all sports at the Division I level. While the recruiting of student-athletes is a serious and important consideration for universities, the recruiting process has received only a limited amount of empirical investigation in the research literature (Klenosky, Templin & Troutman, 2001). Therefore, as a starting point toward this end, the purpose of this study was to develop an instrument which intends to measure factors affecting student-athletes' decision of school selection. This instrument was constructed using information provided in previous literature, interviews with coaches, athletic administrators, and student-athletes as well as information from universities across the United States.

Given the nature of this study, the review of literature focused on (a) factors that influence the choice of university for the typical college student, (b) previous studies on student-athletes and their decision to attend their respective universities, and (c) specific factors which seem to have the most influence on the decision making process of the student-athlete. Therefore, for organizational purposes this chapter was divided into the two sections of (1) college student recruitment and (2) previous studies on student-athlete recruitment.

The aim of the first section of the literature review is to identify the factors for college students in their university selection process. While this information may often be overlooked, it was felt that it may prove insightful and findings from this literature may be generalizable to student-athletes. The aim of the second section is to provide the reader with background on previous research on this topic. Information from these first two sections will then be compared and contrasted to determine component elements.

### College Student Recruitment

College students must make a number of decisions prior to their postsecondary experience. From deciding whether they will continue their education, to determining their majors, and where they will live while in college, decision-making is a major aspect of college life. In fact, selecting appropriate options is a key element in student success (Bateman & Spruill, 1996). Although there have been many studies conducted regarding the factors influencing college students to select a school to attend, there appears to be various opinions relative to the most influential factors.

Chapman (1979) identified that the most important characteristic to students choosing a college was the availability of a desired academic program. He found that students selected colleges which offered the courses they needed to enter graduate school or to obtain employment. This was especially true of students in professional programs and specialized content areas, and less true of those enrolled in general content areas.

According to Canale, Dunlap, Britt, and Donahue (1996), academic programs were the second highest ranked characteristic only to excellent teachers (ranked 1<sup>st</sup>) in a study. The study, conducted in the Hudson Valley region of New York State, had 543 participants,

all high school seniors and juniors. The participants rated college characteristics as very important, somewhat important or not important. The authors felt their results were consistent with the idea that Chapman put forth, in that academic programs were ranked higher by vocational-conscious students who view college as a place to gain specific skills and knowledge that they can showcase to a particular market. However, the authors also point out that a wide variety of majors could appear attractive to the undecided freshman. In their study, twenty-five percent of participants were undecided on their major.

In a study by Johnson and Stewart (1991), 3,708 freshmen entering a large Midwestern university were surveyed during freshmen orientation. The survey was concerned with the participant's decision making process in where to attend school and the factors they considered most influential. The survey revealed that there were no significant differences between the sample and the general population on gender, race, or academic major. The top six factors these participants considered were (in order): academic reputation, quality of academic programs, costs, faculty reputation, friendliness of school, and financial aid offered. Academic reputation and quality of the available programs were considered by over 90% of the students and were rated as being the most important characteristics. The factors that were rated least important of all of the factors that were considered were: preference of friends, preference of family, and athletic programs.

Galotti (1995) took a unique approach to examining the decision making process of college students. In her study, Galotti conducted sessions with participants while they were in high school and then surveyed them during their freshmen year in college. Two

hundred and seven of the original three hundred and twenty two recruited participants completed the study. Galotti wanted to see if the participants first, recalled the factors they were using to make their decision about their college choice. Secondly, she wanted to find out from participants if these factors were indeed the factors they should have considered. Participants were asked to list factors they were using to make decisions regarding choice of college. Next to the list of factors, participants assigned each factor an importance rating from 1 to 10. From this information, factors were classified into 23 categories. Out of the initial data, participants (high school) ranked these factors as the most important (in order): majors offered, cost, school size, location, type of school (coed/single sex, public/private), extracurricular activities, financial aid, and campus atmosphere. After one semester in college, participants revealed that they should have considered the following in their decision making process in selecting a school to attend (in order): cost, majors offered, campus atmosphere, location, school size, financial aid, dorms/housing, and class size/student ratio.

A study by Grossman and Cooper (1996) revealed that college bound students are influenced by their high school guidance counselors. These counselors were surveyed on their attitudes on the influencing factors in the student's selection process. The counselors believe that one of the most important factors in selecting a college is cost. The researchers found that cost became one of the factors that counselors focus on when talking with students about their college selection.

Campus spectator sports, particularly the entertainment spectacles that are football and men's basketball at many large institutions, are the aspect of the university most often visible to those outside of the academic community. One external constituency

whose attention high-profile intercollegiate athletics may attract is prospective students (Toma & Cross, 1998). A couple of notable studies on this unique angle of influencing factors of college students are by Murphy and Trandel (1994) and Toma and Cross (1998).

Murphy and Trandel (1994) studied information from 46 football institutions on increased winning percentages and national championships, and its relation to undergraduate applications. The study showed that the winning record of a university's football team is statistically significant related to the number of applications for admittance received by that university. Parameter estimates from this study indicate that an increase in winning percentage by 0.250 (from 0.500 to 0.750, for example) tends to produce a 1.3% increase in admission applicants in the following year.

Similarly, Toma and Cross (1998) studied the rise of undergraduate applications at universities that had won a national championship in either football or men's basketball in NCAA Division I from 1979 to 1992. Their goal was to discover if there was: (a) increase or decrease in undergraduate applications after a championship season, (b) if the increase or decrease in applications was temporary or a trend, and (c) if this increase or decrease was similar to peer institutions. Out of 30 championships studied, 16 in football and 14 in basketball, notable increases in undergraduate applications were found. Fourteen of the sixteen universities that won or shared a national championship in college football showed marked increases in applications the year following the championship, with some schools reporting a 10-20% increase. This trend was not temporary, rather the universities continued to show increases over the next three years, whereas their peer institutions recorded lower numbers of undergraduate applicants. The majority of the



universities that won a national championship in basketball showed an increase in the number of undergraduate applications received. Some schools reported an increase of 9% or more, however it was noted that 7 of the 14 basketball championship institutions did not show significant gains when compared to their peer institutions. Reasons the researchers gave for this differentiation between football and basketball championship are: (a) timing of championships and application due dates, (e.g., most application deadlines have past by the conclusion of the NCAA basketball tournament) and (b) college football may be more valued in the hearts and minds of those in our society.

Many selective institutions spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to recruit students, although they know they will receive far more applications from qualified students than they can possibly accept (Hoffman, 1997). Faculty and administrators frequently assume that this process, known as college choice, ends when students arrive on campus. Further, there is a belief that understanding choice is only necessary for those who work in admissions, and not important for those who assist students after matriculation. However, failure to understand the decisions which bring students to campus limits the understanding of later decisions (e.g. choice of major, residence, and lifestyle), and interrupts the enrollment management continuum (Bateman & Spruill, 1996).

### *Summary*

As mentioned above, a considerable amount of analysis has been done on the factors influencing the general student population and their college choice. Although the studies reported different findings, a common theme could be identified among the influential factors in the college selection process of college students: academics. Frequent academic factors identified are availability of academic programs, excellent teachers, and academic

reputation of the institution. Hopefully the information from these studies will allow meaningful comparisons between the influential factors of college students and student-athletes.

### Previous Studies on Student-Athlete Recruitment

Because intercollegiate athletes not only choose a university, but also a team and coach, their college selection process may be much different than non-athletes (Letawsky, Schneider, Pedersen & Palmer, 2003). Much of the research conducted on this topic has been on football and men's basketball athletes specifically. These sports are considered high profile, and often are the revenue producing sports at many universities. Recruiting efforts have typically been focused on prospective student-athletes in revenue generating sports because they enhance the university's ability to increase game revenues and donor contributions (Judson, James & Aurand, 2005). Prior research related to the issue of athletic recruiting has focused almost exclusively on determining the relative importance of the attributes used by student-athletes to make school-choice decisions (Cooper, 1996; Doyle & Gaeth, 1990).

The following sections examine information on (a) recruitment of football student-athletes, (b) recruitment of basketball student-athletes, and (c) general research on recruiting student-athletes. The majority of recruiting information has been conducted on football and basketball players; however the third section mentions studies conducted using other student-athletes. The information provided in the following sections is from studies examining responses from coaches, student-athletes, and former student-athletes.

It would not be a thorough review of the topic if these view-points were left unexamined in regards to student-athlete recruitment.

#### *Recruitment of Football Student-Athletes*

Early research on this topic as it relates to football players was conducted in the seventies and early eighties. Edwards and Chow (1979) researched the topic of major influences on the recruitment of football student-athletes. They surveyed 85 head football coaches at NCAA Division I schools. According to their research, the number one influence for recruits was the relationship between the coach and the recruit. In addition, coaching staff, football tradition, educational opportunities, facilities, geography/location, parental influence, style of ball played, win/loss record, and conference prestige of the college rounded out the top ten influences.

Dickey (1983), former recruiting coordinator at the University of Pittsburgh, surveyed Pitt's recruits and signees. Participants rated recruiting components on the following scale: 1) had great effect, 2) had some effect, and 3) had little effect. The top five reasons football players picked the University of Pittsburgh were: football career opportunities, official campus visit, campus facilities, football facilities, and recruiting coach. All of these reasons tied for first place while educational opportunities came in sixth place. This study allowed Dickey and other recruiting coordinators at Pitt to see where emphasis should be placed during their contact with recruits.

Kraft and Dickerson (1996) surveyed 74 football student-athletes who had made official recruiting visits to a Division I university (and had been offered scholarships) from 1992 to 1994. The survey asked questions in relation to football, academics and campus influences. The survey found that the coaching staff was the most significant

influence on attending the institution. Specifically, it was the interest the coaching staff showed in the student-athlete as well as the perceived honesty of the coaches by the student-athlete that was the greatest influence. Factors relating to football were also found to be undoubtedly more influential than factors involving academics or the campus. These results would seem to suggest that factors for football student-athletes could be distinctly different than the factors for college students.

Klenosky et al. (2001) tried a different technique of obtaining information from football student-athletes. They used a means-end approach, where the researcher and participant are in a semi-structured one-on-one interviewing format called laddering. The means end approach in this study examined the mean-end relationship that linked the influential factors to desired benefits and higher level personal values. They had 27 Division I student-athletes from the same institution participate, and all of the student-athletes reported being recruited by 20 or more schools prior to making their school choice decision. Influential factors were recorded as well as the student-athletes response to, “why is (that factor) important to you?” or “what makes (that factor) important to you?” The most frequently mentioned factor referred to the coach/coaching staff. Three perspectives were derived from the coach/coaching staff factor and they include: (1) coach/coaching staff helped the student-athletes feel comfortable with their school choice decision, (2) coach/coaching staff helped the student-athletes improve their skills and abilities, and (3) coach/coaching staff was seen by the student-athletes as integral in the amount of playing time they received.

More recently, Hecklinski (2003) surveyed 246 student-athletes in three Division II football programs. The programs were comparable in athletics and academics and were

part of the same conference. The purpose of the study was to find out what factors influence football recruits decision to attend a Division II school. The 26 item survey captured dimensions of academics, coaching, family/home, campus culture, and athletic program. The coaching staff was identified as the most important factor in the student-athletes' choice of school. Following closely behind coaching staff as an important factor was the team's potential for winning/success, academics of the university, offer of scholarship, and majors offered. Least important factors included diversity of student population, extra-curricular activities outside of athletics, former head coach, size of student population, and academic help/tutoring.

### *Summary*

In the previously mentioned studies on recruiting football student-athletes, the relationship with the coach/coaching staff was mentioned either as the number one factor in school choice by student-athletes, or it was in the top five of all factors mentioned. Given the fact that the coach/coaching staff is who the student-athlete will most likely spend the majority of their time with; it is not surprising that this factor came out on top.

### *Recruitment of Basketball Student-Athletes*

In early research on basketball student-athletes, Roh (1971) surveyed 61 college freshmen that were considered to be outstanding basketball players. Roh wanted to find out what factors influenced these student-athletes to attend the school they eventually chose. Results from the study indicated that the coaching staff was the most important factor in influencing a student-athlete's college choice. The coaching staff influenced student-athletes through their rapport with players, how they conducted themselves one-on-one with the student-athlete, and by their communication skills. After coaching staff,

the student-athletes were most heavily influenced by the college basketball program and the basketball tradition at their school. Also identified as influences were educational opportunities, conference affiliation of the athletic program, and the student-athletes parents.

Hess (1986) examined how well 150 NCAA basketball coaches could predict responses from 85 high school basketball players, ranked in the top 100 in the nation on the subject of school choice. Hess wanted to find out how important the 30 factors on the survey were to the student-athletes decision making process. The coaches responded differently to 27% of the answers given by the student-athletes. The coaches' predictions did not match the student-athlete's responses in the area of academics and graduation rates. The coaches underemphasized the importance of these factors in the student-athletes' responses. Another area in which the coaches' predictions were incorrect was that of the school's athletic tradition. The coaches overemphasized the importance of this area that was not as highly valued by the student-athletes. This study is important because it shows a gap between what coaches think they know about student-athletes and what they really know about what the athletes' value.

Another study comparing the perceptions of basketball coaches and their student-athletes was conducted by Ulferts (1992). Ulferts administered surveys to varsity basketball players (men and women) and their coaches at 10 NCAA Division I schools, 10 NCAA Division II schools, and 28 NAIA Division I schools in the upper Midwest during the 1990-1991 season. In total, there were 96 coaches and 1440 basketball student-athletes. The purpose of the survey was two-fold: (1) to examine factors that influenced college basketball players to choose to attend a certain institution of higher

education and (2) to discover if the perceptions of basketball coaches are accurate to those of the student-athletes that they are trying to recruit. Overall, the top three factors that influenced the basketball student-athletes the most were (in order): academic reputation of the college, athletic scholarship, and the basketball program/tradition. Although the men and women student-athletes selected the same top three factors, the NCAA Division I men ranked basketball program/tradition significantly higher than the women. The top three perceptions of influential factors by the coaches were (in order): academic reputation, basketball program/tradition, and athletic scholarship. There were no significant differences reported between the perceptions of the men and women coaches. Based on intercollegiate athletic division, academic reputation was the only factor ranked by both men and women coaches in all divisions, as well as all of the student-athletes. This evidence shows that academics should be a priority when recruiting basketball players in the Midwest, but may not be the top priority in the rest of the regions of the United States.

Cooper (1996) surveyed the 1992-1993 basketball recruits in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. These three states were selected because of the researchers familiarity with many of the coaches, as well as the large representation of school of different levels i.e., community colleges, junior colleges, NAIA Division I and Division II, and NCAA Division I and Division II. Thirty-nine of these schools, totaling 219 student-athletes participated in the survey. The survey asked participants to rate the importance of 40 variables believed to impact their school choice. The variables were grouped into categories of academics, athletics, location, and cost. Participants were also asked to list separately the top three factors from the list of variables that were the most influential in

their school choice. Results indicated that the coach's commitment to the program ranked the highest. The next highest factor was player-coach relations, followed by team's style of play, scholarship money and assistant coaches. The least important factors included private school, area planning to live after graduation, away from home, state school, red shirt year options available. Responses were consistent among all of the different levels of schools. Cooper states, "Athletes are not looking for the best deal, the best school, or even being on scholarship, but for the coach and the basketball program they will feel most comfortable with while pursuing their college education".

### *Summary*

In the previously mentioned studies on recruiting basketball student-athletes, the most influential factor for school choice is not easily identifiable. Common themes that emerged were coaching staff, academics or academic reputation, athletic scholarship, coaches' commitment to program, and the basketball program itself. The reason for such a variation may be due to either the geographic location of the studies or the emphasis on surveying the different division levels of the NCAA, NAIA, as well as junior and community colleges.

### *General Research on Recruiting Student-Athletes*

In intercollegiate athletics, the distinct purpose of recruiting is essentially to evaluate a potential student-athlete to see if they can possibly benefit your team and program. This is based on evaluation of the potential student-athlete's skill level as well as their academic eligibility. After examining the many studies that have been completed regarding factors influencing student-athletes, it is pertinent to point out the most common and influential factors for prospective student-athletes. According to the



research, these recurring factors are the most influential in a student-athlete's choice of school: coaching staff, academics, success of program, personal achievement, future teammates, school location/campus, and family.

*Relationship with Coach/Coaching Staff.* Relationship with coach/coaching staff can be defined by many attributes. However, the most common theme seems to focus on the one-on-one relationship between the coach and the recruit. Potential student-athletes are often impressed by coaches' reputation, honesty and commitment to their players. Cooper's research (1996) clearly demonstrated the impact of the coach and his commitment to the players. It also indicated the lack of emphasis on the part of the student-athlete for the school itself. Of the five most important considerations, four were based on the coaching staff and the team's style of play, and the fifth on athletic scholarship money. The student-athletes are not the only ones who think this category is an important factor in recruiting. In fact, Copeland (1982) reported that NCAA Division II coaches thought that the coaching staff was the most important factor in the school selection process. Adler and Adler (1991) observed 39 basketball players from the time they were recruited throughout their college careers. These players emphasized how important the coach and the program, as well as the coach's reputation were in evaluating schools they were recruited by.

According to the literature, aspects of this factor that should be considered when developing an instrument are: reputation of coach, honesty of coach, coach's commitment to players, experience of coach, the ability of the athlete to trust the coach, and getting along with the coach.

*Academics.* Academic standards have become more stringent over the years, thanks to college admission standards and the mandates set forth by the NCAA. Since few athletes will ever advance to the professional level, the goal of every athlete should be to receive a quality education and earn a degree (Hoch, 1991). The potential student-athlete can go to college, perhaps with a full scholarship, be a part of something positive, and earn a college degree. Education is what colleges and universities “sell” and so should the recruiter. Klenosky et al. (2001) found that their participants mentioned the importance of the school’s academic reputation because they viewed it as an ideal way to get a good job, which would lead to security in the future. Copeland (1982) reported that NCAA Division III coaches thought that educational opportunities were the most important factor for prospective student-athletes. He thought this may be due in part to the fact that no athletic scholarships are available at the Division III level, but that student-athletes were able to compete for other types of scholarships.

It is vital the recruiter emphasizes the importance of attending classes and maintaining the GPA standards to the potential student-athletes during the recruiting process. Coaches need to stress a partnership between athletics and academics and recruit only those athletes that can compete academically. It is unfair to both the athlete and the coach to paint unrealistic pictures of college academic life during recruiting (Avans, 1998). Sadly, Cooper (1996) found that academic related events such as meeting with the team’s academic advisor, meeting with faculty in the student-athlete’s major area, and attending a class held little interest for most of the basketball prospects. More so now than ever, coaches, administrators, and recruiting staffs should be certain that the student-athletes

they are recruiting are going to give the institution as much effort academically as they are athletically.

According to the literature, aspects of this factor that should be considered when developing an instrument are: academic reputation of the school, academic programs of interest, student-athlete's ability to succeed academically, and the value of an education from that school.

*Success of Program.* Success of program can include attributes such as: past successes, probability of future success, traditions steeped within the athletic program, or level of conference play. Tradition plays a critical role in recruiting and maintaining the "pride in place" relationship, whether it is maintaining an established tradition, rebuilding to establish past glories, or building to establish new loyalties and hopefully future memories (Sutton, 1983). According to a 1981 report from the College Football Association, a winning tradition is a factor in recruitment and was of increasing importance to athletes playing on teams with a high winning percentage during the past five years. This report was from a survey that was conducted at 33 member institution and 2,116 college football players responded. The study also confirmed that at these 33 institutions the football program is more important than the institutions academic offerings during the recruiting process (College Football Association, 1981).

Football coaches have also ranked the success of program as one of the most influential factors for football student-athletes. Dixon (1972) found that head college football coaches ranked tradition as the most influential factor for student-athletes. Success of program is not limited only to football student-athletes. Ulferts (1992) found that basketball program and tradition was ranked first by the coaches of men's basketball

teams as the reason that student-athletes attend a certain school. A winning athletic program is one way to enhance that identification and in most cases be able to turn that identification into financial support (Sutton, 1983). In addition, winning teams bring notoriety, which not only allows greater selectivity in admissions but also stimulates booster donations to the athletic department and the university as a whole (Zimbalist, 1999).

According to the literature, aspects of this factor that should be considered when developing an instrument are past/current traditions of the school, a winning program, potential for a successful program, and prestige/competitiveness of school's conference.

*Personal Achievement.* Student-athletes personal achievements can be defined by many characteristics, including: offer of scholarship, playing time, media exposure, and opportunity for advancement to the professional ranks. While not all student-athletes are completely focused on their own personal achievements, many choose where they will attend an institution of higher learning exclusively with this thinking in mind. Doyle & Gaeth (1990) found in their study of collegiate softball and baseball student-athletes that getting a scholarship for tuition and not just books was a major factor in selecting an athletic department. It is the coach's perception that the athletic scholarship should receive a strong emphasis during recruiting (Hess, 1986).

Copeland (1982) reported that NCAA Division I coaches thought that playing opportunity was the most important factor for prospective student-athletes. He thought this may be due in part to the fact that Division I prospects often have many full scholarship offers from different colleges and that playing time would be the point of differentiation among the schools. Klenosky's et al. (2001) participants felt that playing

time was also a factor to consider, due to that playing time could help them improve skill-wise, but more so due to the opportunity to play on television. Participants felt that media exposure could also increase their chances of moving into the professional ranks of football. Fazel & Bennett (1996) also found that the decision of recruits may be indirectly influenced by a team's ability to have their games televised. Their research showed that the teams with media exposure are more successful in recruiting top prospects in comparison to teams that are rarely televised.

According to the literature, aspects of this factor that should be considered when developing an instrument are: media exposure, amount of scholarship, amount of playing time, and opportunity to improve skills/abilities.

*Future Teammates.* The value of the input that can be provided by potential teammates is often overlooked. Official and unofficial visits to campus should include interaction with current student-athletes. The recruit will be able to judge their comfort level with those already in the program, their sense of belonging, as well as the level of support they can expect to receive as a full-fledged member of the team. Clark & Hoffman's study (1983) revealed that student-athletes should evaluate their personal abilities in relationship to those other students and student-athletes who are going through the school selection process. They also found that prospective student-athletes should consider the opinions of the student-athletes currently involved in the intercollegiate program of interest. These current student-athletes could provide the recruit with valuable information about the team, coach and school that they would be unable to find elsewhere. Ulferts (1992) found that "basketball team members" was ranked first by NCAA Division I and II student-athletes. Interestingly it was the team members who

most impressed them during their on campus visits. Sometimes it is the student-athlete that the recruit spends time with on their campus visits that may “seal the deal” for the school. If schools do not exposing recruits to current student-athletes, they are failing to provide them a complete picture of the athletic program.

According to the literature, aspects of this factor that should be considered when developing an instrument are: feeling supported by current team, comfort level with current team, sense of belonging, and getting along with current team.

*Location/Campus.* Location of the school’s campus can be one of the biggest influences in the school selection process that has little to do with the athletic program in which student-athletes will participate. Not only is the location of the campus important, but the campus itself can be an influence on prospective student-athletes. For example, Fortier (1986) found that freshmen public university and college football players in Minnesota ranked athletic scholarship, college location, and tuition/housing/eating costs as the most important influences on their school choice. Two of the top three had some relation to the location or the campus in general. In Ulferts’ (1992) study of basketball student-athletes, they ranked the athletic facilities as the campus facilities which most impressed them during their on campus visit. Also in the study, academic facilities ranked second and campus grounds fell third.

The location of the school is also important to the athlete in terms of family and peer influence and the desire to be near family and friends. In many cases, an athlete decides between equally rated schools because one is closer to his/her family (Avans, 1998). Kilpatrik & Kilpatrik (1995) surveyed 133 former college student-athletes from 97 institutions in 29 different states. Most of the participants were males who had

participated in football or basketball. They were asked the ten most important factors in their school selection process and the top two were geographical location and impression from the campus visit. The second part of the survey asked the former college student-athletes if they had to go through the school selection process again to rank the same factors. Although geographical location and impression from the campus visit fell in the rankings they still placed in the top five at third place and fifth place, respectively. Ulferts also (1992) reported that NCAA Division II women basketball student-athletes ranked geographical area in the top three reasons in school selection. Concurrently, 86% of the participants in the study were attending college in the same state or in the state adjacent to the state where they graduated from high school.

According to the literature, aspects of this factor that should be considered when developing an instrument are: geographic location of school, campus atmosphere, sport facilities, and appeal of the city.

*Family.* Family has been described as the most important factor in a student-athlete's decision in the school selection process. Families can literally persuade the student-athlete to choose one school over the other. Kraft & Dickerson (1996) found that parents greatly influence the choice of college. Most of the prospects asserted that their parents influenced them the most. Ulferts (1992) found that women basketball student-athletes ranked their mother as the person who had the most influence on them in the school selection process. Mother was followed by Father, and then head coach at the institution. The study also found that men basketball student-athletes ranked their father as the person who had the most influence on them in school selection process. Father was followed by Mother, and then the head coach at the institution. Fortier (1986) found that

freshmen private college football players ranked academic reputation and parents as the most important influences on their school choice. Some of the familial influence can be contributed to geographical location as well. Klenosky et al. (2001) reported that an additional factor of influence was the ability of their friends and family members to watch them play. This influence was further described through the two attributes of location and television. Bradley (1994) emphasizes the importance of television coverage for student-athletes that decide to attend a school far from home. Media coverage gives athletes a way to keep in touch with them and their athletic progress.

According to the literature, aspects of this factor that should be considered when developing an instrument are: family perceptions of school, family perceptions of coaching staff, proximity of school to family, and ability of family to attend athletic events.

#### *College Students versus Student-Athletes*

Previous research suggests that there is not a clear cut answer for what influences all student-athletes, but that the coach-player relationship seems to be a strong factor. This is considerably different from those students who are not athletes. Typical college students considered academics to be the strongest influence on their school choice. It would be fair to say that most college students are attending an institution of higher education to prepare them for their future career, which is why the focus is on academics. Student-athletes are preparing for their future as well, but are also providing a service to the school that will demand a considerable amount of their time. It is important for these student-athletes to form bonds and trust the people that will surround them during their college career. This is not to say that student-athletes do not value academics. The



literature is loaded with student-athletes that value the reputation of the school and its academic programs.

While differences were noted between college students and student-athletes, there are similarities among them as well. College students and student-athletes are concerned with the amount of scholarship they will be awarded to attend a certain institution. It is important to most college students, athletes or not, to obtain the most financial aid possible. Another similarity exists in the respect that most college students want to fit in, or belong to the general student population. For student-athletes, it means a sense of belonging with their teammates. For college students, it means finding a niche within their academic program or extracurricular activities.

### Summary

The literature review set out to accomplish the following in regards to influences on the school choice for student-athletes: (a) examine factors that influence the school selection process for the typical college student and (b) describe previous studies on student-athletes and their decision to attend their respective universities.

The fact that student-athletes are distinctively different, especially in regards to sport participation makes it extremely difficult to identify a clear example of what student-athletes are influenced by when making a decision about which school to attend. Cooper states, “The factors we’d ordinarily believe would be of most interest in picking a school—academic reputation, cost, and small class size—were not considered the most important factors by the college basketball recruits”.

Many of the previous studies on this topic focused on specific sports, male athletes only, or on a variety of division levels. It is the purpose of this study to design an instrument that incorporates student-athletes, male and female, in all sports at the NCAA Division I level. This is the level where there is the most to gain or lose financially for the athletic department.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

Intercollegiate athletics coaches and recruiters want the best possible student-athlete for their program. Because the competition to recruit the best student-athlete is fierce in some sports (i.e., revenue producing sports, such as football or basketball) it would be important for coaches and recruiters to have data based information to assist them in their recruiting process. The development of instrumentation designed to measure factors that influence the decision making process of student-athletes could prove useful in this regard.

The intent of the measurement tool created for this study was to identify the most influential factors that led current UNLV student-athletes to attend UNLV. Responses may be different or similar based on sport, and the measurement tool created may show which items are useful for further research at UNLV. There is a strong desire for this information at UNLV as it will help them concentrate their marketing efforts in recruiting future student-athletes.

Two distinct processes were undertaken in this study. First, an instrument was developed to measure the influential factors in the student-athletes recruiting process to UNLV. The procedures for developing and validating the instrument included the following steps: (a) instrument and item development, (b) content validity, and (c) pilot

of the instrument. The second process that took place was a preliminary report for the UNLV Athletic Department regarding the analyses of the data. Each process is described in the following pages.

### Instrument Development and Validation

Although instrumentation is best used with a theoretical approach, none were found to be particularly applicable for this purpose. The intent of this research was to begin a series of studies in which the processes by which student athlete recruits select their school could be better understood. Toward this end, this study developed an instrument, examined the inter-scale validity, and the underlying structure of UNLV student-athletes' responses. What follows next is a description of procedures followed in the instrument and item development as well as, procedures and analyses undertaken in the pilot test of the instrument.

#### *Instrument and Item Development*

Fowler (2002) describes the process of writing, revising, evaluating, and organizing instrument items. His process was the guide for this study. To begin, the purpose of the instrument's use was determined. The purpose was determined through collection of information regarding recruiting from peer universities in the United States. Interviews with UNLV coaches, athletic administrators, and student-athletes help to focus the purpose more narrowly. Next, a review of literature and research related to influences on non athletes and student-athletes in the school selection process revealed some factors that seem to be the most influential.

The review of literature highlighted multiple factors that impact how student-athletes are influenced in their school selection process. The information gathered revealed that there is neither a theoretically predictive factor, nor one true factor that influences all student-athletes in the same manner. For example, factors that are influential for female student-athletes may not be the same for male student-athletes in the same sport. Gender may play a role in the factors one uses in the school selection process. Further, student-athletes in one sport may value certain criteria higher than student-athletes in a different sport in regards to school selection. From this information, six important components evolved and included: (a) relationship with coaching staff, (b) success of program, (c) personal achievement, (d) academics, (e) teammates, (f) and UNLV/Las Vegas (i.e., campus/city).

Six components were identified as being the most influential factors for UNLV student-athletes. The research team defined the components as follows: (1) *relationship with coaching staff* involves the student-athlete's perception of initial contact with the coaching staff, perception of connections made with the coaching staff, perceptions of coaching staff relationships with student-athletes, perceptions of sincerity of coaching staff, and perception of coaching staff by student-athlete's parent/guardian, (2) *success of sport program* involves the student-athlete's perception of past successes in the sport program, perception of current successes in the sport program, perception of future successes in the sport program, perception of the competitiveness of the Mountain West Conference, knowledge of past UNLV student-athletes advancing to the professional ranks, and perception of sport program by student-athlete's parent/guardian, (3) *personal achievement* involves the student-athlete's perception of amount of playing time

received, perception of contributions to the sport program, perception of media exposure, and perception of individual successes by student-athlete's parent/guardian, (4) *academics* involves the student-athlete's perceptions of UNLV academic programs, perceptions of student-athlete's ability to succeed academically at UNLV, perception of academic support provided by athletic department, and perception of the value of academics at UNLV by student-athlete's parent/guardian, (5) *relationship with teammates* involves the student-athlete's perception of meeting student-athletes already in the sport program, perception of student-athlete's ability to fit in with current team, perception of support provided by current team, and perception of the current team by the student-athlete's parent/guardian, (6) *UNLV campus/city of Las Vegas* involves the student-athlete's perception of campus facilities for athletics, perception of student life at UNLV, perception of having family and friends attend athletic events, and perception of the school and city by the student-athlete's parent/guardian.

The instrument created for use in this study contained 45 items. Items were critiqued by a professor in survey methodology, as well as a former NCAA coach and recruiter. Items were then revised to clarify those with double meaning and those that were unclear. Next, four experts with backgrounds in NCAA Division-I coaching and recruiting, NCAA Division-I athletic administration, NCAA compliance, and sport management evaluated the items for clarity and content validity. The instrument items were thought to be reflective of the six components of influential factors on student-athletes school selection process (relationship with coaching staff, success of program, personal achievement, academics, teammates, and UNLV/Las Vegas). It was estimated that the instrument would take the students approximately fifteen to twenty minutes to

complete. Each item was scored using a four point Likert scale with possibilities ranging from “Completely Disagree” to “Disagree” to “Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”. A not applicable (NA) choice was also available. Demographic information was also collected for each student-athlete including age, sport, gender, year in school, state/province of high school graduation, junior college transfer status, scholarship status, and ethnicity.

### *Content Validity*

The main objective of assessing content validity was to determine whether or not the items appear to have been placed within the appropriate component. Content validity of the items was assessed by the use of a panel of experts. The panel included individuals from a variety of educational and athletic backgrounds including sport management, NCAA Division-I coaching and recruiting, NCAA Division-I athletic administration, and NCAA compliance. Their purpose was threefold: (1) review the items, (2) revise items as necessary, and (3) place items within the appropriate component.

In addition to the panel of experts, a focus group was created. The focus group was UNLV’s Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, which consisted of 17 members. The Student-Athlete Advisory Committee is a group of student-athletes who provide insight on the student-athlete experience at UNLV (i.e., rules, regulations, and policies affecting student-athletes at UNLV). Each sport program at UNLV was represented in this focus group. Their purpose was threefold: (1) assist in creating survey items, (2) take the survey and provide feedback, and (3) help with distribution of survey to their individual sport teams.

### *Pilot of the Instrument*

*Participants and Setting.* The 45 item instrument was piloted during the 2005-06 school year. Approval for this study was granted by the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at UNLV on December 12, 2005 (Appendix A). Cooperation for this study from the UNLV athletic department was also guaranteed by UNLV's Associate Athletic Director for NCAA Compliance, Eric Toliver. The UNLV Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, under the direction of UNLV's Compliance office were also an integral part in collecting informed consent and distributing surveys to all UNLV student-athletes.

The instrument was intended for current UNLV student-athletes. It was expected that all current student-athletes at UNLV would participate in the study, but given that some sports were in the off-season, it was unlikely to have 100% participation. Nunnally (1978) recommends a 10 to 1 ratio (number of participants to items), however others (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001) suggest a 5 to 1 ratio is adequate in most cases.

*Data Collection.* Cooperation with the UNLV Student-Athlete Advisory Committee allowed the research team to have a representative from each of UNLV's 17 Division-I athletic teams to help coordinate time and date of instrument distribution and collection. Coaches for all 17 UNLV sport programs were contacted either in person or by phone to set up a convenient time for the instrument to be taken by their student-athletes. Before participation in the instrument, student-athletes were instructed to sign and date the Informed Consent. Participation in the survey was strictly voluntary. Instructions for the instrument were read aloud, but no additional information was provided. Given the



convenience of the sample but nature of off-season sports, the researcher estimated a participation rate of 70%.

*Data Analysis.* Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was used to identify the components that comprise the instrument. Because this study is not based on theory, rather based on perceptions on those involved with this study, PCA was used. PCA is often used in the early stages of research to gather information about the interrelationships among a set of variables. This analysis takes a large set of variables and looks for a way that the data may be 'reduced' or summarized using a smaller set of factors or components (Pallant, 2005). The sample size and the internal consistency of items determined previously are also considered when using PCA. PCA was also used to determine if in fact there were six components as previously identified.

In order to determine the number of components to be retained for the instrument, a variety of methods will be used. First, Kaiser's rule states that only those components whose eigenvalues are greater than 1 should be retained. An eigenvalue is defined as the amount of total variance explained by each factor, with the total amount of variability in the analysis equal to the number of original variables in the analysis (Mertler & Vannatta, 2001). Second, Catell's scree test was computed and in this manner the eigenvalues of the factors were plotted and inspected. An examination for the point at which the shape of the curve changes direction and becomes horizontal will be a significant landmark. Catell suggests that all factors above the elbow, or change in the plot should be retained because these points contribute to most of the explanation of variance in the data (Pallant, 2005). Next, Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the internal reliability of the scale.

Cronbach's alpha helps determine to what degree the items in the scale are all measuring the same underlying attribute (Pallant, 2005). Cronbach's alpha was conducted for each of the six components prior to completing the PCA, as well as for the components the PCA determined to be actual components.

### Preliminary Analysis

In order to provide UNLV athletics with a meaningful report, descriptive statistics were analyzed according to gender and sport. To determine gender effects, an independent samples T-Test was conducted. The independent samples t-test is used to compare mean scores of two different groups of people, i.e., males and females. To determine differences among sports, a one-way between groups ANOVA was conducted. The ANOVA compares the variance between the groups, i.e., eleven sport programs, for the components determined by the PCA. If differences are determined, a post-hoc test will be able to determine the differences between the sports.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### Results

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the study. In this regard, instrument development and validation are first presented. In addition and in accordance with the methodology described in Chapter 3, a preliminary analysis of the perceptions of current UNLV student-athletes was also undertaken and the results are provided herein.

For clarity, the chapter is divided into two sections, Instrument Development and Validation and Preliminary Analysis. The Instrument Development and Validation section contains three subsections: (a) instrument and item development, (b) content validity, and (c) pilot of the instrument. Instrument and Item Development subsection details how the items were written and the scale used for the instrument. Content Validity subsection covers information provided by the focus group and the panel of experts. Pilot of the Instrument subsection provides information on (a) participants, (b) data collection and (c) data analysis. The participants' demographic information was included as well as data analysis examining the appropriateness of conducting the PCA. Initial reliability of preliminary developed scales of the instrument are presented along with results of the PCA. This section contains the percent variance explained by the components, as well as justification for the number of components kept

for further analysis. A second Cronbach's alpha was conducted to determine reliability of the new components and those results are also discussed.

The second section, Preliminary Analysis, includes results from an independent samples t-test. The independent samples t-test served as an analysis between genders on the components. An ANOVA was also conducted to serve as an analysis between sport programs on the components. Each section is described in the following pages.

## Instrument Development and Validation

### *Instrument and Item Development*

According to the literature there are many factors which could influence a student-athlete to choose a school. It was important that these factors be represented in the instrument; therefore information was collected from a variety of sources. The Student-Athlete Advisory Committee submitted 85 items for review and after cross referencing the items with the literature, the research team narrowed the items to 45 (with revisions). Items were reviewed by a former NCAA coach/recruiter as well as a professor of survey methodology. Items that were determined to be unclear, redundant, or confusing were eliminated or re-written. It was determined that statements would be written in first person and that the items would have a positive orientation.

A Likert scale was used in the instrument because it was felt to be the best scale to measure the perceptions of the student-athletes. In addition to the Likert scale of 1 to 4 (1=completely disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=completely agree), it was also important to the focus group that there be an NA added to the scale for those items that were not applicable to their recruiting process at UNLV. An NA would be necessary for those

student-athletes that may be from the Las Vegas area or were not officially recruited to participate in intercollegiate athletics at UNLV (Appendix B). NA was selected by the 290 participants for 3.8% of the items.

### *Content Validity*

Based on the literature and the insight of UNLV Athletics coaches, administrators, and student-athletes that was cross-validated with the literature, it was determined that the instrument should attempt to measure the following components: (a) relationship with coaching staff, (b) success of program, (c) personal achievement, (d) academics, (e) teammates, (f) and UNLV/Las Vegas (i.e., campus/city). The panel of experts then reviewed the 45 item instrument, and assisted in determining the corresponding component (e.g. relationship with coaching staff, success of program, personal achievement, academics, teammates, and UNLV/Las Vegas) for each item. Each component was represented with at least six items, while the maximum number of items per component was nine.

A focus group consisting of UNLV's Student-Athlete Advisory Committee provided the research team with a list of items they felt were important to them in the recruiting process. If these student-athletes were not officially recruited by UNLV to participate in intercollegiate athletics (i.e., walk-on), then they provided a list of items that they thought would be important for future recruits. Items provided by the focus group were reflective of influential factor identified in the literature as well as in other instruments relating to this topic.

### *Pilot of the Instrument*

*Participants.* Demographics of the UNLV student-athlete population were collected

and student-athletes reported on their status in the following ways: recruitment status, gender, year in school, race/ethnicity, geographic location of high school graduation, scholarship status, and sport participation. Two-hundred and ninety of the 389 UNLV student athletes participated in this study, or 74.6%. Seventeen of the participants, one representative from each sport, were members of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, which served as the focus group for the study. Given that the survey was administered in the spring, many sports were out of season and access to entire teams was limited. The UNLV Dance team was unavailable, with the exception of one participant who helped make up the original focus group for the study.

The majority of UNLV student-athletes who participated in this study (over 73%) were recruited to play at UNLV while only 24.5% considered themselves as walk-ons. A total of six participants did not indicate recruitment status. Additionally, 15.9% of UNLV student-athletes were junior college transfers.

Gender frequencies in this study indicated that of the 290 student-athletes, 160 were male (55.2%) and 130 were female (44.8%). In terms of class, freshmen accounted for the largest percentage of student-athletes participating in the study at 33.4%. Sophomores accounted for 23.1%, juniors accounted for 24.1% and seniors accounted for 19%. Only one person surveyed did not indicate their year in school. Demographics identifying race/ethnicity indicate that Whites/Caucasians (58.6%) made up the largest racial/ethnic population, with Blacks/African Americans (21.4%), Other (6.9%), Asian/ Pacific Islander (6.6%), Hispanic (5.5%), and American Indian (0.7%). Only one participant did not indicate their racial/ethnic background.

It was not surprising to find that the majority of UNLV student-athletes are recruited from the western region (AK/AZ/CA/CO/HI/ID/MT/NV/NM/OR/UT/WA/WY) of the United States (70.5%). The states most represented in this instrument include California (30.3%), Nevada (19.7%), Arizona (6.2%), and Washington (4.1%). However, it was interesting to find that 12.4% of UNLV student-athletes are recruited from countries outside the US.

Most of UNLV student-athletes receive some scholarship money for sport participation. Only two student-athletes did not indicate scholarship status, the others are as follows: full scholarship (43.8%), partial scholarship (29.3%), and no scholarship (26.2%).

Table 1 shows the number of participants based on sport. Football had the largest participation rate, making up 23.4% of the sample, with swimming (12.4%), soccer (10.7%), baseball (10.3%) and basketball (9.7%) rounding out the top five.

Table 1

Pilot Study Participation by Sport and Gender

	Sport	Frequency	Males	Females	% of Sample
Valid	baseball	30	30	0	10.3
	basketball	28	14	14	9.7
	cheer	11	2	9	3.8
	dance	1	0	1	.3
	football	68	68	0	23.4
	Golf	21	12	9	7.2
	soccer	31	15	16	10.7
	softball	19	0	19	6.6
	swimming	36	15	21	12.4
	tennis	11	4	7	3.8
	track/xc	21	0	21	7.2
	volleyball	13	0	13	4.5
	Total	290	160	130	100.0

*Data Collection.* The instrument and informed consent forms were distributed and collected in a scheduled team meeting by the researcher and/or that sport's representative from the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee. All members of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee were briefed on the protocol for distributing, collecting and providing instructions for the instrument and the informed consent. The directions for the instrument as well as the instructions on the informed consent were read by the researcher or that sport's representative from the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee. No additional information was provided. The attempt to replicate the procedure for each of the 17 athletic teams at UNLV helps to ensure the study's internal validity. Participation was voluntary and was limited to those student-athletes over 18 years of age. Participation rates slightly exceeded the expectation of the researcher at just over 74%.

*Data Analysis.* In order to determine the suitability of the data for a PCA (PCA), three preliminary analyses were run, (a) inspection of the correlation matrix, (b) KMO test, and (c) Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. First, the correlation matrix was inspected which revealed the correlation coefficients greater than .3. Second, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .959 which exceeded the recommended value of .6. Third, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was determined to be within the bounds of statistical significance ( $p < .05$ ). The result of the three analyses demonstrated the sufficiency to conduct PCA as an analytic technique.

Next, the 45 items of the Factors in Recruiting Process were subjected to PCA using SPSS (version 12.0). The PCA was conducted so that the items with low factor loadings in phase one could be identified and eliminated from the second phase of the analysis. Cronbach's alpha was calculated in order to determine the average correlation among all



the items that were developed to measure the intended characteristics. Ideally, the Cronbach alpha coefficient of a scale should be above .7 (Pallant, 2005). The Cronbach alpha for each of the six original components in this study was above the recommended .7 and is provided in Table 2. This result indicates that each of the categories contains items that appear to be highly correlated with one another.

Table 2

Cronbach's Alpha for Original Six Components

Component	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Relationship with Coach	9	.948
Success of Program	8	.895
Personal Achievement	6	.791
Academics	7	.878
Relationship with Teammates	6	.901
UNLV/Las Vegas	9	.897

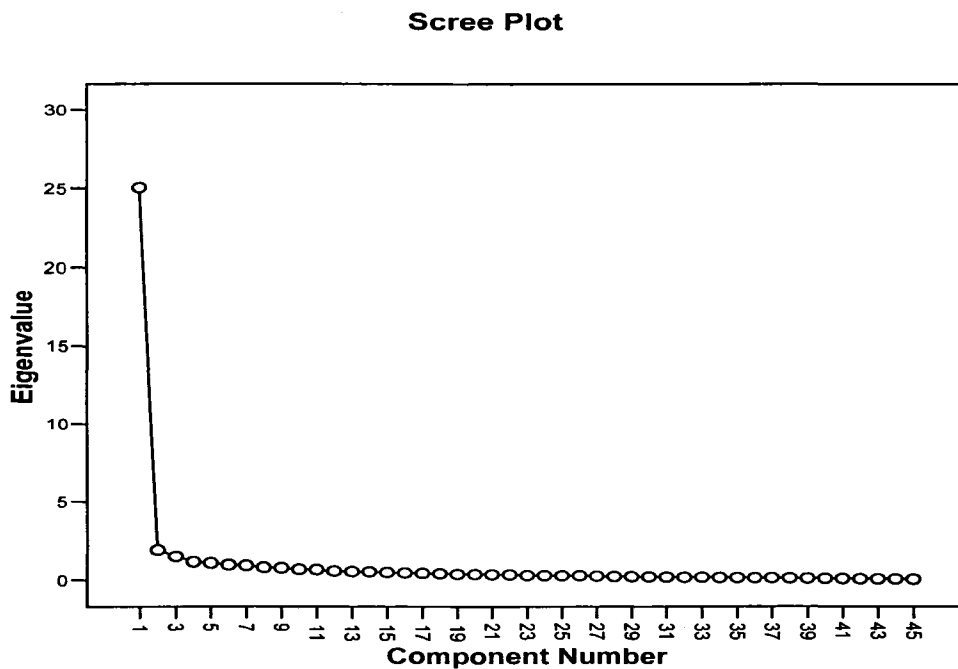
The results of the exploratory factor analysis, using PCA revealed the presence of five components with eigenvalues exceeding 1.00, explaining 23.7%, 19.9 %, 9.5%, 8.6%, and 6.8% of the variance respectively. It was determined after reviewing the component matrix however, that five components would yield poor results. Many of the items loaded on multiple components with the absolute values level suppressed at .3, creating a busy and cumbersome component matrix. Further analysis was conducted in order to determine the number of factors to retain.

Two considerations were made in order to determine how many of the components should be retained for additional analysis. First, using Catell's (1966) scree test was used to examine eigenvalues of the components which indicated that there was a significant drop-off after component one and little difference between components after component

two (refer to Figure 1). Second, the total variance explained by the first two components and the decline in variance explained by the components thereafter provide additional evidence to retain the two characteristics for further analysis. Components 3, 4, and 5 explained little variance and some of the items were not conceptually matched with each other. Therefore in order to clean the data even further another PCA was conducted this time suppressing the absolute value at .649 (see Table 4).

Figure 1

Catell's Scree Test



When absolute values were suppressed at a higher level, the number of items analyzed was reduced considerably from 45 to 15 comprising two components. Component 1 was relabeled Relationship with Coaching Staff, and Component 2 was relabeled Family

Perceptions of UNLV/Las Vegas. A review of the 11 items used to define Component 1 revealed items that intend to measure student-athletes perceptions of the coaching staff within their sport. Therefore, Component 1 was labeled “Relationship with Coaching Staff” (Refer to Table 3). A review of the 4 items used to define Component 2 revealed items that intend to measure student-athletes perceptions of what their parent/guardian thought of UNLV and Las Vegas. Therefore, Component 2 was labeled “Family Perceptions of UNLV/Las Vegas” (Refer to Table 3). Table 3 shows the items that were analyzed as well as how their loading scores and the percent variance explained.

Table 3

Two Component Solutions to the Factors in Recruiting Process Survey

Item	Component 1	Component 2
My parent/guardian liked the coaching staff	.786	
The head coach made me feel important	.783	
I felt that the coaching staff genuinely cared about me as a person	.723	
I felt like I would be supported by the coaching staff	.692	
I felt that the coaching staff cared about my success as a student	.690	
I believed the coaching staff in my sport could produce a winning team	.689	
I believed that the coaching staff really wanted me to be a part of their team	.669	
I felt like I would get along with the coaching staff	.665	
I felt that the coaching staff genuinely cared about their athletes	.664	
My parent/guardian felt that the athletic department at UNLV cared about athletes' success as students	.661	
I felt that the coaching staff could make me a better athlete	.650	
My parent/guardian were comfortable with the idea of me attending UNLV		.800
My parent/guardian had a positive image of Las Vegas as a place to attend school		.760
My parent/guardian believed that UNLV would be a good school to attend		.730
Family members other than my parent/guardian liked the idea of me attending UNLV		.679
% of variance explained	23.7%	19.9%

Note: Absolute values suppressed at .649

Once it was decided to retain the top two components, another Cronbach's alpha was conducted in order to determine the reliability of the two new components (refer to Table 4).

Table 4

Cronbach's Alpha for New Components

Component	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Relationship with Coaching Staff	11	.954
Family Perceptions of UNLV/Las Vegas	4	.882

#### Preliminary Analysis

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine if there were significant differences between male and female student-athletes on the two components. Alpha levels were set at .05 for all analyses. For Component 1, Relationship with Coaching Staff, no significant differences were found between scores for male student-athletes ( $M = 3.4$ ,  $SD = .577$ ) and female student-athletes [ $M = 3.38$ ,  $SD = .613$ ;  $t(.245) = .250$ ,  $p = .80$ ]. For Component 2, Family Perceptions of UNLV/Las Vegas, no significant differences were found between male student-athletes ( $M = 3.25$ ,  $SD = .631$ ) and female student-athletes [ $M = 3.32$ ,  $SD = .652$ ;  $t(265) = -.872$ ,  $p = .384$ ].

As Table 5 shows, the mean value for Relationship with Coaching Staff is, considerably lower for the sport of soccer ( $M=2.65$ ) than all other sports. Also noteworthy, the sport with the highest mean was softball ( $M=3.87$ ).

Table 5

Mean Values for Relationship with Coaching Staff by Sport

Sport	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
baseball	28	3.4805	.38399
basketball	26	3.2867	.55963
cheer	8	3.3068	.37305
football	58	3.4060	.56355
golf	20	3.7000	.39472
soccer	27	2.6566	.73091
softball	19	3.8756	.20149
swimming	27	3.4411	.57313
tennis	8	3.5227	.47300
track/xc	15	3.4606	.49492
volleyball	10	3.5636	.47490
Total	246	3.3939	.59289

Note: Likert Scale: 1=completely disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=completely agree

Table 6 shows that the mean value for the sport of soccer (M=3.04) was again the lowest among all UNLV sports. The sport of softball again had the highest mean value for this component at (M=3.69).

Table 6

Mean Values for Family Perception of UNLV/Las Vegas by Sport

Sport	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
baseball	26	3.2788	.42619
basketball	27	3.2407	.75473
cheer	9	3.1111	.70833
football	65	3.2923	.59222
golf	21	3.3929	.58934
soccer	30	3.0417	.83326
softball	19	3.6974	.36873
swimming	28	3.1339	.69216
tennis	8	3.5938	.59596
track/xc	20	3.3125	.65331
volleyball	13	3.4808	.50478
Total	266	3.2914	.64184

Note: Likert Scale: 1=completely disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=completely agree

A one-way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if differences between sport programs existed on the two components of Relationship with Coaching Staff and Family Perceptions of UNLV/Las Vegas. Levene's test of Homogeneity of Variances indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated. There was a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level for Component 1 among the sports [ $F(10,235)=8.1, p=.00$ ]. There was also a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level for Component 2 among the sports [ $F(10, 235)=1.8, p=.04$ ]. The eta squared or effect size, was also calculated for each component. For Relationship with Coaching Staff, the effect size was .026 which is considered a small effect, and for Family Perceptions of UNLV/Las Vegas effect size was .069, which is also considered a small effect.

Because significant differences were found, the Tukey HSD, Post-hoc analysis was used to discern which sports were found to be significant from one another. Results for the post hoc analysis of Component 1, Relationship with Coaching Staff can be found in Table 7. As Table 7 shows, these analysis showed that significantly lower mean score differences were found for soccer compared to all other sports (refer to Table 7 for p values). Additionally, a significantly higher mean score was found for softball compared to basketball, football, and soccer (refer to Table 7).

Table 7

## Multiple Comparisons between Sports for Component 1

(I) sport	(J) sport	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Soccer	baseball	-.82395(*)	.14080	.000
	basketball	-.63015(*)	.14343	.001
	football	-.74939(*)	.12161	.000
	Golf	-1.04343(*)	.15400	.000
	softball	-1.21903(*)	.15631	.000
	swimming	-.78451(*)	.14207	.000
	Tennis	-.86616(*)	.21013	.003
	track/xc	-.80404(*)	.16810	.000
	volleyball	-.90707(*)	.19324	.000
Softball	basketball	.58888(*)	.15755	.010
	football	.46964(*)	.13798	.031
	Soccer	1.21903(*)	.15631	.000

Post-hoc analyses for Component 2 showed that significant differences were found only between soccer ( $p=.20$ ) with softball having significantly higher mean value.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

#### Instrument Development and Validation

Results from the initial Cronbach's Alpha showed that the scales that were developed were highly reliable (refer to Table 2). These scales were built upon the basis of previous literature and structured interviews with UNLV coaches, administrators, and student-athletes. Given the strength of the reliability results, it is understood that these components are important in the student-athlete recruiting process at UNLV. After it was decided to retain the two components with the largest amount of variance, another Cronbach's Alpha was conducted with similar results (refer to Table 4). It is important to note that because all six original components were considered reliable, they should be retained in future studies, but modified to increase the total variance.

Initially, the 45 item instrument was designed with items thought to represent six components: (a) relationship with coaching staff, (b) success of sport program, (c) personal achievement, (d) academics, (e) relationship with teammates and (f) UNLV campus/city of Las Vegas. Results from the Principal Component Analysis identified a 2 component solution in which 43% of the total variance was explained.

As was previously explained, the PCA was conducted two times. The first PCA conducted resulted in a 5 component model which explained 68.45% of the total variance. It would have been difficult to identify unique relationships between the items



loading on five components, and since the first two components made up the majority of the cumulative variance, two components were selected for further analysis. Even though the two component model accounted for less cumulative variance explained, the items that loaded for each component appeared to share similar characteristics. The second PCA conducted resulted in a 2 component model, with 15 items explaining 43.6% of the variance. These items conceptually fit with one another, identifying the two major components in recruiting our current UNLV student-athletes.

A review of the 11 items used to define Component 1 revealed items that intend to measure student-athletes perceptions of the coaching staff within their sport. Therefore, Component 1 was labeled “Relationship with Coaching Staff” (Refer to Table 3). This component was comprised of items that measured student athletes’ perception about their importance to the coaching staff, feeling supported by the coaching staff, getting along with the coaching staff, feeling cared about by the coaching staff as a person and student, and beliefs in the coaching staff (i.e., “The head coach made me feel important” [feeling important], “I felt like I would be supported by the coaching staff” [feeling supported], “I felt like I would get along with the coaching staff” [getting along], “I felt the coaching staff genuinely cared about my success as a student” [feeling cared about], “I believe the coaching staff in my sport could produce a winning team” [beliefs in coaching staff]). These perceptions of support, getting along with, feeling cared about and belief in coaching staff were also found in previous studies as important in recruiting student-athletes. This component also contained seven of the nine items intended to measure the original component, “Relationship with Coach/Coaching Staff”. This information

reiterates the strength of the component as a measure of perceptions the student-athlete has of the coaching staff (see Table 4).

A review of the 4 items used to define Component 2 revealed items that intend to measure student-athletes perceptions of what their parent/guardian thought of UNLV and Las Vegas. Therefore, Component 2 was labeled “Family Perceptions of UNLV/Las Vegas” (Refer to Table 3). This component was comprised of items that are about the student-athletes’ perceptions of their family’s: image of UNLV, image of Las Vegas, attractiveness of UNLV (i.e., “My parent/guardian believed that UNLV would be a good school to attend” [image of UNLV], “My parent/guardian had a positive image of Las Vegas as a place to attend school [image of Las Vegas], “Family members other than my parent/guardian liked the idea of me attending UNLV [attractiveness of UNLV]. Previous studies also pointed out that familial influence was prevalent in a student-athletes school selection process. All four of the items found in the new component help make up the original component entitled “UNLV/Las Vegas” This information reiterates the strength of the component as a measure of perceptions the student-athlete has of their parent/guardian opinion of the campus and city (see Table 4).

#### Preliminary Analysis

When comparing male and female student-athletes, no significance was found in relation to either Component 1 or 2. To clarify, this finding demonstrates that no significant differences were found between male and female student-athletes who attend UNLV in terms of their relationship with their coaching staffs and their family’s perception about UNLV/Las Vegas. Means for both genders on both components were in

between the “agree” (3 on the Likert scale) to “completely agree” (4 on the Likert scale). On average, current male and female UNLV student-athletes agree with the items that comprise these two components (see Table 3). Previous literature supports the finding that there is little difference between male and female student-athletes when it comes to factors in the school selection process (refer to Chapter 2). This finding may also be indicative that irregardless of gender, recruitment strategies may focus on the student-athletes’ relationship with the coaching staff and their families perceptions of the school/city.

When comparing sports, significances were noted in relation to Relationship with Coaching Staff. Softball student-athletes had the highest mean score and soccer student-athletes had the lowest mean score. Significant differences were noted between soccer student-athletes and all other sports, other than cheer. Significant differences were also noted between softball student-athletes and basketball and football. Soccer, basketball, and cheer were the only sports that were below the average mean score, however soccer was the only sport that had a mean score equivalent to “disagree” on the Likert scale. It is difficult to speculate why soccer had the only negative response to Relationship with Coaching Staff; however changes in the coaching staff for both men and women’s soccer occurred this past school year.

Significant differences were fewer in relation to Family Perceptions of UNLV/Las Vegas. Again, softball student-athletes had the highest mean score and soccer student-athletes had the lowest mean score. Significant differences were only noted between soccer student-athletes and softball student-athletes. It is interesting to note that five sports fell below the average mean score: baseball, basketball, cheer, soccer and

swimming. All of the sport programs that fell below the average mean score for both components are commonly identified as team sports. Maybe the two components, Relationship with Coaching Staff and Family Perceptions of UNLV/Las Vegas are not as important for team sport athletes who have others (their team) to identify with and consider their “family”.

It is striking that softball had the highest mean scores for both of the components. It is imperative that UNLV Athletic Administrators to take a look at this sport program in terms of its recruitment strategies. The way in which student-athletes are targeted, along with time spent with coaching staff by the student-athlete on their campus visit are two areas that could be examined.

### Summary

This study was designed specifically for the purpose of obtaining information about UNLV student-athletes. Information gathered from this study was for the purpose of identifying factors which were influential for current UNLV student-athletes. This information provided the UNLV Athletic Department with up-to-date information on influential factors in recruiting for future use in recruiting student-athletes (Appendix C).

Information from the survey could also help improve marketing efforts for UNLV Athletics. Demographic information revealed that the majority (70.5%) of UNLV student-athletes come from the western region of the US. With limited marketing dollars, it would seem logical that the focus of that money be directed at the states with the most student-athlete representation. In this case, UNLV Athletics could benefit by targeting areas of California and Nevada for additional recruits. This would not only be economical

in terms of marketing costs, but also helpful in the mission of gaining publicity in proximate geographic locations.

Input for the survey was received from UNLV coaches, administrators, and student athletes. Additional sources from outside the university were also obtained, however the majority of information came from interviews with the individuals and groups mentioned above. For student-athletes that chose to attend UNLV, their perceptions about their relationship with the coaching staff and their families' perceptions about UNLV/Las Vegas accounted for over 40% of the variance. The results of this study coincide with prior research in identifying the relationship with the coach/coaching staff as the most influential factor for student-athletes (Component 1). The study also shows how influential a student-athletes' families are in the school selection process (Component 2).

For future research, it would be a good idea to survey all of the recruits that come to UNLV's campus for an official or unofficial recruiting visit, and assess similarities and differences among those student-athletes that choose to attend UNLV versus those student-athletes who choose other schools. Future research at UNLV could focus on using the Factors in Recruiting Process Survey (Appendix B) on all student-athletes who come to campus for a recruiting trip to see if the underlying structures are the same for those student-athletes who choose not to attend UNLV. This would give UNLV additional information on whether or not the two new components identified in this study, Relationship with Coaching Staff and Family Perceptions of UNLV/Las Vegas, are true of all student-athletes UNLV chooses to recruit.

One modification of the current Factors in Recruiting Process (Appendix B) that should be made before surveying future recruits is to remove the NA (not applicable)

from the survey. The purpose of the NA in this survey was to give those current UNLV student-athletes who were not officially recruited or attended a campus visit prior to attending UNLV, an option if the item did not apply to them. A modified survey should include a new Likert scale: 1 – Completely disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Agree, and 5 – Completely Agree. This type of scale would serve a better purpose when surveying future UNLV student-athlete recruits, whether they decide to attend UNLV or not. Replication of this study with a larger sample of UNLV recruited student-athletes could also prove beneficial in trying to target needs in areas such as student-athlete recruitment and marketing UNLV sport programs to future student-athletes. A tool such as this will hopefully improve future recruiting efforts for UNLV.

## APPENDIX A



### **Social/Behavioral IRB – Expedited Review Approval Notice**

#### **NOTICE TO ALL RESEARCHERS:**

*Please be aware that a protocol violation (e.g., failure to submit a modification for any change) of an IRB approved protocol may result in mandatory remedial education, additional audits, re-consenting subjects, researcher probation suspension of any research protocol at issue, suspension of additional existing research protocols, invalidation of all research conducted under the research protocol at issue, and further appropriate consequences as determined by the IRB and the Institutional Officer.*

**DATE:** December 12, 2005  
**TO:** Dr. Monica Lounsbery, Sports Educational Leadership  
**FROM:** Office for the Protection of Research Subjects  
**RE:** Notification of IRB Action by Dr. Michael Stitt, Chair  
Protocol Title: **Student Athlete Recruitment at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas**  
Protocol #: 0511-1807

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This memorandum is notification that the project referenced above has been reviewed by the UNLV Social/Behavioral Institutional Review Board (IRB) as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45 CFR 46. The protocol has been reviewed and approved.

The protocol is approved for a period of one year from the date of IRB approval. The expiration date of this protocol is December 12, 2006. Work on the project may begin as soon as you receive written notification from the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS).

**PLEASE NOTE:**

Attached to this approval notice is the **official Informed Consent/Assent (IC/IA) Form** for this study. The IC/IA contains an official approval stamp. Only copies of this official IC/IA form may be used when obtaining consent. Please keep the original for your records.

Should there be *any* change to the protocol, it will be necessary to submit a **Modification Form** through OPRS. No changes may be made to the existing protocol until modifications have been approved by the IRB.

Should the use of human subjects described in this protocol continue beyond December 12, 2006, it would be necessary to submit a **Continuing Review Request Form** *60 days* before the expiration date.

If you have questions or require any assistance, please contact the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at [OPRSHumanSubjects@ccmail.nevada.edu](mailto:OPRSHumanSubjects@ccmail.nevada.edu) or call 895-2794.



## APPENDIX B

### FACTORS IN RECRUITING PROCESS

Current Age: _____	Gender: Male ___ Female ___
Sport: _____	Year in school: FR___ SO___ JR___ SR___
State/Province of high school graduation: _____	Walk-on? Yes___ No___
Amount of scholarship: Full ___ Partial ___ None ___	
Ethnicity: White/Caucasian ___ Black/African American ___ Hispanic___	
Asian/Pacific Islander ___ American Indian ___ Other ___	

### DIRECTIONS

This survey asks you to respond to items as a potential student athlete at UNLV. There are no right or wrong answers. Fill in the choice that best describes how you think or feel about the statement.

Example:

**I am confident in my abilities as an athlete**

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>NA</b>
Completely disagree	Disagree	Agree	Completely agree	Not applicable

If you are confident in your abilities as an athlete you would circle "4" for completely agree. If you are not confident in your abilities as an athlete you would circle "1" for completely disagree. If you feel that the statement does not apply to you, please circle "NA" for not applicable. If you have any questions, please contact the research staff at 895-4629.

Thank you for helping with our survey.

**INFORMATION COLLECTED IN THE STUDY WILL REMAIN STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.  
THERE IS NO IDENTIFYING PERSONAL INFORMATION (NAMES OR ADDRESSES)  
REQUESTED.**

<b>1</b> Completely disagree	<b>2</b> Disagree	<b>3</b> Not Applicable	<b>4</b> Agree	<b>5</b> Completely agree
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1	I felt that the coaching staff genuinely cared about their athletes	1	2	3	4	5
2	I liked the practice and game facilities for my sport	1	2	3	4	5
3	I felt that the coaching staff could make me a better athlete	1	2	3	4	5
4	I felt that the coaching staff cared about my success as a student	1	2	3	4	5
5	During my visit to campus I felt comfortable with the athletes from my sport program	1	2	3	4	5
6	I felt that my family and friends would be able to come watch me compete at UNLV	1	2	3	4	5
7	I believed that the coaching staff really wanted me to be a part of their team	1	2	3	4	5
8	Before my campus visit I knew about the successes of my sport program at UNLV	1	2	3	4	5
9	I believed I would be given immediate opportunity to play/compete	1	2	3	4	5
10	I felt that UNLV offered academic programs I was interested in	1	2	3	4	5
11	I felt that I would belong with the UNLV athletes from my sport program	1	2	3	4	5
12	My parents/guardians believed that UNLV would be a good school to attend	1	2	3	4	5
13	The head coach made me feel important	1	2	3	4	5
14	I believed there was strong potential for my sport program to be successful	1	2	3	4	5
15	I believed I could contribute to the success of my sport program at UNLV	1	2	3	4	5
16	Compared to other universities, I believed that the athletic department at UNLV had programs in place to help athletes be successful students	1	2	3	4	5

1 Completely disagree	2 Disagree	3 Not Applicable	4 Agree	5 Completely agree
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17	I liked the UNLV athletes from my sport program	1	2	3	4	5
18	My parent/guardian liked the coaching staff	1	2	3	4	5
19	The coaching staff provided me with enough information for me to make a good decision about where I wanted to play	1	2	3	4	5
20	Before I visited campus I knew about UNLV athletes that had advanced to higher levels of competition in my sport	1	2	3	4	5
21	I believed my sport program at UNLV would provide me with opportunity to play/compete at the next level	1	2	3	4	5
22	I felt my sport program at UNLV emphasized the importance of being a student	1	2	3	4	5
23	I felt athletes in my sport program at UNLV were supportive of the coaching staff	1	2	3	4	5
24	My parent/guardians were comfortable with the idea of me attending UNLV	1	2	3	4	5
25	My parents/guardians had a positive image of Las Vegas as a place to attend school	1	2	3	4	5
26	I felt the Mountain West Conference would allow my sport program to be successful	1	2	3	4	5
27	As a potential athlete at UNLV, I believed I would receive a great deal of media exposure	1	2	3	4	5
28	I felt my academic advisor would help me maintain my eligibility at UNLV	1	2	3	4	5
29	I felt athletes in my sport program at UNLV were supportive of one another	1	2	3	4	5
30	Family members other than my parents/guardians liked the idea of me attending UNLV	1	2	3	4	5

<b>1</b> Completely disagree	<b>2</b> Disagree	<b>3</b> Not Applicable	<b>4</b> Agree	<b>5</b> Completely agree
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31	I believed the coaching staff was honest with me	1	2	3	4	5
32	I felt that my sport at UNLV was more successful than the other schools I could have attended	1	2	3	4	5
33	My friends liked the idea of me attending UNLV	1	2	3	4	5
34	My parents/guardians believed that a degree from UNLV would be highly valued	1	2	3	4	5
35	My parents/guardians believed I would have the same opportunities for individual success at UNLV as I would anywhere	1	2	3	4	5
36	My parents/guardians liked the athletes in my sport program at UNLV	1	2	3	4	5
37	I felt like I would get along with the coaching staff	1	2	3	4	5
38	I believed the coaching staff in my sport could produce a winning team	1	2	3	4	5
39	My parents/guardian felt that the athletic department at UNLV cared about athlete's success as students	1	2	3	4	5
40	I liked UNLV's strength and conditioning facilities	1	2	3	4	5
41	I felt that the coaching staff genuinely cared about me as a person	1	2	3	4	5
42	My parents/guardians felt my sport program at UNLV would be successful	1	2	3	4	5
43	I felt I would enjoy the student life experiences at UNLV	1	2	3	4	5
44	I felt like I would be supported by the coaching staff	1	2	3	4	5
45	UNLV athletes made me believe in the future success of my sport program	1	2	3	4	5

## APPENDIX C

### **Preliminary Report to UNLV Department of Athletics**

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of my dissertation research, “Student-Athlete Recruitment at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas” to the Department of Athletics at UNLV. This research took place during the 2005-2006 academic school year and was based on information obtained from current UNLV coaches, administrators and student-athletes.

#### **Purpose of Study**

The study’s intent was to be a beginning point in a line of research important to UNLV and its Athletic Department. The research team wanted to know what the underlying structures were for student-athletes in the recruiting process that essentially led them to choose UNLV.

#### **Research Questions**

This study intended to answer two questions. First, what items comprise a valid and reliable instrument to measures factors that influence student-athletes’ decision making process? Second, what distinct factors influence the decision of student-athletes to attend UNLV?

#### **Survey Development**

Information on the recruiting process of student-athletes was gathered from current UNLV coaches, athletic administrators, student-athletes, as well as other Division I schools and a review of literature. From this information, **six components** evolved and included:

- relationship with coaching staff (connection made w/coach, sincerity of coach)
- success of program (current/past successes, traditions, in the MWC)
- personal achievement (playing time, media exposure, individual success)
- academics (programs at UNLV, ability to succeed at UNLV, academic support)
- teammates (fitting in with, supported by, supportive of coach)
- UNLV/Las Vegas (campus atmosphere, city, facilities, student life)

The instrument created for use in this study contained 45 items. Four experts with backgrounds in NCAA Division-I coaching and recruiting, NCAA Division-I athletic

administration, NCAA compliance, and sport management evaluated the items for clarity and content validity. The instrument items were thought to be reflective of the six components of influential factors on student-athletes school selection process (listed above). A Likert scale of 1 to 4 (1=completely disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=completely agree) was used in the instrument because it was felt to be the best scale to measure the perceptions of the student-athletes.

#### Participants

290 UNLV student-athletes participated in the survey. All of UNLV's sport programs, except for the dance team (unavailable sample), were represented in the findings.

#### **Pilot Study Participation by Sport and Gender**

	Sport	Frequency	Males	Females	Percent of Sample
Valid	baseball	30	30	0	10.3
	basketball	28	14	14	9.7
	cheer	11	2	9	3.8
	dance	1	0	1	.3
	football	68	68	0	23.4
	Golf	21	12	9	7.2
	soccer	31	15	16	10.7
	softball	19	0	19	6.6
	swimming	36	15	21	12.4
	tennis	11	4	7	3.8
	track/xc	21	0	21	7.2
	volleyball	13	0	13	4.5
	Total	290	160	130	100.0

#### Reliability

The six components previously mentioned were analyzed for reliability and were found to be highly reliable. This means that the items that were developed truly represented the component in which it was placed.

#### **Cronbach's Alpha for Original Six Components**

Component	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Relationship with Coach	9	.948
Success of Program	8	.895
Personal Achievement	6	.791
Academics	7	.878
Relationship with Teammates	6	.901
UNLV/Las Vegas	9	.897

Note: Recommended value is .7 or higher

### Data Analysis

Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was used to identify the components that comprise the instrument. Because this study is not based on theory, rather based on perceptions on those involved with this study, PCA was used. PCA is often used in the early stages of research to gather information about the interrelationships among a set of variables. PCA was also used to determine if in fact there were six components as previously identified.

The results of the PCA revealed the presence of five components with eigenvalues exceeding 1.00, explaining 23.7%, 19.9 %, 9.5%, 8.6%, and 6.8% of the variance respectively. It was determined after reviewing the component matrix however, that five components would yield poor results. Because the first two components explained the majority of the variance (43.6%), they were retained for further analysis.

Component 1 was relabeled Relationship with Coaching Staff, and Component 2 was relabeled Family Perceptions of UNLV/Las Vegas. A review of the 11 items used to define Component 1 revealed items that intend to measure student-athletes perceptions of the coaching staff within their sport. Therefore, Component 1 was labeled "Relationship with Coaching Staff" (Refer to Table 3). A review of the 4 items used to define Component 2 revealed items that intend to measure student-athletes perceptions of what their parent/guardian thought of UNLV and Las Vegas. Therefore, Component 2 was labeled "Family Perceptions of UNLV/Las Vegas". The next table shows the items that were analyzed as well as how their loading scores and the percent variance explained.

### **Two Component Solutions to the Factors in Recruiting Process Survey**

Item	Component 1	Component 2
My parent/guardian liked the coaching staff	.786	
The head coach made me feel important	.783	
I felt that the coaching staff genuinely cared about me as a person	.723	
I felt like I would be supported by the coaching staff	.692	
I felt that the coaching staff cared about my success as a student	.690	
I believed the coaching staff in my sport could produce a winning team	.689	
I believed that the coaching staff really wanted me to be a part of their team	.669	
I felt like I would get along with the coaching staff	.665	
I felt that the coaching staff genuinely cared about their athletes	.664	
My parent/guardian felt that the athletic department at UNLV cared about athletes' success as students	.661	
I felt that the coaching staff could make me a better athlete	.650	
My parent/guardian were comfortable with the idea of me attending UNLV		.800
My parent/guardian had a positive image of Las Vegas as a place to attend school		.760
My parent/guardian believed that UNLV would be a good school to attend		.730
Family members other than my parent/guardian liked the idea of me attending UNLV		.679
% of variance explained	23.7%	19.9%

Note: Absolute values suppressed at .649

### Differences between Genders

An additional test was conducted to determine if there were differences between genders. T-test results showed that there were **NO** differences between male and female student-athletes in regards to these two components. Means for both genders on both components were in between the “agree” (3 on the Likert scale) to “completely agree” (4 on the Likert scale). On average, current male and female UNLV student-athletes agree with the items that comprise these two components. Previous literature supports the finding that there is little difference between male and female student-athletes when it comes to factors in the school selection process. This finding may also be indicative that irregardless of gender, recruitment strategies may focus on the student-athletes’ relationship with the coaching staff and their families perceptions of the school/city.

### Differences between Sports

Tests were also conducted to determine if there were differences between sports. ANOVA results showed that there were significant differences between the sports on both components. The mean results for Component 1 and Component 2 are shown in the following tables.

### **Mean Values for Relationship with Coaching Staff by Sport**

Sport	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
baseball	28	3.4805	.38399
basketball	26	3.2867	.55963
cheer	8	3.3068	.37305
football	58	3.4060	.56355
golf	20	3.7000	.39472
soccer	27	2.6566	.73091
softball	19	3.8756	.20149
swimming	27	3.4411	.57313
tennis	8	3.5227	.47300
track/xc	15	3.4606	.49492
volleyball	10	3.5636	.47490
Total	246	3.3939	.59289

Note: Likert Scale: 1=completely disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=completely agree

The mean value for Relationship with Coaching Staff is, considerably lower for the sport of soccer (M=2.65) than all other sports. Also noteworthy, the sport with the highest mean was softball (M=3.87).



### Mean Values for Family Perception of UNLV/Las Vegas by Sport

Sport	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
baseball	26	3.2788	.42619
basketball	27	3.2407	.75473
cheer	9	3.1111	.70833
football	65	3.2923	.59222
golf	21	3.3929	.58934
soccer	30	3.0417	.83326
softball	19	3.6974	.36873
swimming	28	3.1339	.69216
tennis	8	3.5938	.59596
track/xc	20	3.3125	.65331
volleyball	13	3.4808	.50478
Total	266	3.2914	.64184

Note: Likert Scale: 1=completely disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=completely agree

The mean value for the sport of soccer (M=3.04) was again the lowest among all UNLV sports. The sport of softball again had the highest mean value for this component at (M=3.69).

Because significant differences were found, the Tukey HSD, Post-hoc analysis was used to discern which sports were found to be significant from one another. Results for the post hoc analysis or Component 1, Relationship with Coaching Staff can be found in the following table. As the table shows, these analysis showed that significantly lower mean score differences were found for soccer compared to all other sports. Additionally, a significantly higher mean score was found for softball compared to basketball, football, and soccer.

### Multiple Comparisons between Sports for Component 1

(I) sport	(J) sport	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Soccer	baseball	-.82395(*)	.14080	.000
	basketball	-.63015(*)	.14343	.001
	football	-.74939(*)	.12161	.000
	Golf	-1.04343(*)	.15400	.000
	softball	-1.21903(*)	.15631	.000
	swimming	-.78451(*)	.14207	.000
	Tennis	-.86616(*)	.21013	.003
	track/xc	-.80404(*)	.16810	.000
	volleyball	-.90707(*)	.19324	.000
Softball	basketball	.58888(*)	.15755	.010
	football	.46964(*)	.13798	.031
	Soccer	1.21903(*)	.15631	.000

Significant differences were noted between soccer student-athletes and all other sports, other than cheer. Significant differences were also noted between softball student-athletes and basketball and football. Soccer, basketball, and cheer were the only sports that were below the average mean score, however soccer was the only sport that had a mean score equivalent to “disagree” on the Likert scale. It is difficult to speculate why soccer had the only negative response to Relationship with Coaching Staff; however changes in the coaching staff for both men and women’s soccer occurred this past school year.

Post-hoc analyses for Component 2 showed that significant differences were found only between soccer ( $p=.20$ ) with softball having significantly higher mean value. It is interesting to note that five sports fell below the average mean score: baseball, basketball, cheer, soccer and swimming. All of the sport programs that fell below the average mean score for both components are commonly identified as team sports. Maybe the two components, Relationship with Coaching Staff and Family Perceptions of UNLV/Las Vegas are not as important for team sport athletes who have others (their team) to identify with and consider their “family”.

#### Suggestions

It is striking that softball had the highest mean scores for both of the components. It is imperative that UNLV Athletic Administrators take a look at this sport program in terms of its recruitment strategies. The way in which student-athletes are targeted, along with time spent with coaching staff by the student-athlete on their campus visit are two areas that should be examined.

For future research, it would be a good idea to survey all of the recruits that come to UNLV’s campus for an official or unofficial recruiting visit, and assess similarities and differences among those student-athletes that choose to attend UNLV versus those student-athletes who choose other schools. Future research at UNLV could focus on using the Factors in Recruiting Process Survey on all student-athletes who come to campus for a recruiting trip to see if the underlying structures are the same for those student-athletes who choose not to attend UNLV. This would give UNLV additional information on whether or not the two new components identified in this study, Relationship with Coaching Staff and Family Perceptions of UNLV/Las Vegas, are true of all student-athletes UNLV chooses to recruit.

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