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# Identifying Influential Factors of Student-Athlete's Selection Process Among NCAA Division II Baseball Players

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Identifying Influential Factors of Student-Athlete's Selection Process Among NCAA  
Division II Baseball Players

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Leadership Education Department: Teacher and School Leadership

In Partial Fulfillment of the Masters of Sports Management Degree - Master's Capstone

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## **1. Introduction**

Choosing a college or university can be difficult. This decision will affect the next four or five years of a person's life. In college athletics, potential student-athletes have the same decision to make, but their decision may involve more factors to consider when making a commitment to a university or college. Scholarship money, location of the school, program prestige, and coaching style are some of the factors that may attract or repel a potential student-athlete. These factors not only have an effect on the student-athlete, but also the coaching staff and the university recruiting them.

The site of the study, the coaching staff of a baseball team at an NCAA Division II program is one of many universities that would love to know what their potential student-athlete is thinking. What factors are important to the recruit? Knowing what matters to a recruit provides a framework from which to look at the strengths of that university's recruiting approach, what it could improve on, what have competing colleges done well, and what has hurt competing colleges? The coaches need to identify these factors important in the decision making process of the potential student-athlete early in the recruiting process. Knowing these factors allows universities the capability to make a recruiting plan with the objective of landing successful recruits in order to better their programs.

### **Correlation of Athletic Success and University Success**

Universities across the country have similar objectives to increase enrollment and increase revenue. According to multiple studies, athletic success can improve both of those areas at a college or university. The "Flutie Effect" refers to "the phenomenon of having a successful college sports team increase the exposure and prominence of a

university” (Wikipedia, 2015). Doug Flutie, a Quarterback for the Boston College football team, threw a Hail Mary touchdown pass to win a memorable game in 1984. That year Boston College’s applications went up 16 percent and another 12 percent in 1985 (McDonald 2003). Another university that has had a noticeable climb due to a successful sports team, is the University of Gonzaga. Since making the NCAA tournament for basketball in 1999, the school saw a 22 percent increase in their student body size, were forced to hire 34 additional professors to address the increase, and their head basketball coach now earns a higher salary than their university president (Dausch 2004).

### **Talent wins championships.**

The notion that talent wins championships might hold true for college baseball. The Collegiate Baseball Newspaper has ranked the top recruiting classes in NCAA Division I Baseball dating back to 1983. Since 2006, five out of the seven teams that received the billing as the best recruiting class in the nation have played in the national championship during the four years the university had with that recruiting class (the 2013 and 2014 teams haven’t completed their four years). That being said, coaches have gone to great lengths to attract top recruits. Social media, facility upgrades, and trendy uniforms complement traditional approaches such as phone calls, e-mails, letters, and text messages. Each coach’s focus is on selling his or her program and university with the hope of wooing the potential student-athlete.

In the recruiting process, what every coach wants to know is, what is the potential student-athlete thinking?

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this paper is to better understand the factors involved in the decision-making process of a 2015-2016 NCAA Division II baseball team as to why they chose to attend this university. By understanding why prospective baseball players are choosing a university, the coaches can see the strengths and weaknesses of their current recruiting system and develop a new recruiting plan focused on the information gained from this study.

**Research Question**

What were the most important factors that influenced individuals on a 2015-2016 Division II baseball team to choose the university they attend?

**Research Design**

This study is a mixed methods study using surveys and focus groups. This study will provide the university baseball coaching staff insight on why the 2015-2016 baseball team chose this university.

**Vocabulary**

**Recruit:** A student that is being pursued by a university through various forms of contact and promotions to participate in athletics at that university.

**Recruiting:** The process of a university pursuing a student-athlete to participate in athletics at that university.

**Recruiting class:** A university's committed student-athletes categorized by the year they are attending the university.

NAIA: The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics is a smaller association than the NCAA that is more comparable to the Division II level of the NCAA.

### **Connection to Leadership**

“Leaders set direction, build an inspiring vision, and create something new,” (Mind Tools, 2015, p 1). A collegiate baseball coach needs to have a vision for his or her program. Part of that vision is taking on the challenge of creating his or her team through recruiting. This study focuses on why an NCAA Division II baseball team’s players from the 2015-2016 season chose to come to that university. “Leadership is about mapping out where you need to go to "win" as a team or an organization; and it is dynamic, exciting, and inspiring,” (Mind Tools, 2015, p 1). By understanding the factors of why these potential student-athletes committed to this university allows the coaching staff and administration the ability to map out and create a new vision of how to recruit and inspire future prospective athletes. It will also help all of the athletic program’s coaching staffs with future recruiting.

### **Assumptions**

This study is directly connected to a 2015-2016 Division 2 University baseball team and its 32-man roster. The data from this study may be useful for future recruiting at the university for baseball, and to a lesser extent for other sports at the university, or possibly other baseball institutions.

### **Limitations**

This study is limited to the 32 baseball players on the university’s roster for the 2015-2016 season. Having the knowledge of why potential college baseball players chose

another school to attend could clarify recruiting techniques and strategies the university being evaluated in this study could improve on in the recruiting process.

There are numerous factors that could contribute to a potential student-athlete choosing or not choosing the university. Not all factors that could affect a potential student-athlete are presented on the survey used in this study. The factors were chosen based on previous literature reviews and deciphered by the author as to commonality.

**Overview:**

Chapter Two will examine previous studies that focused on the college decision making factors of student-athletes. The chapter will attempt to group factors from various studies into a common list.

## **II. Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

What matters to one potential student-athlete might not matter to another potential student-athlete. However, it is important to see if there are common factors which play a role in the decision of these potential student-athletes. In order to simplify the numerous factors that could potentially play a role in the decision-making process, this literature review shows the factors grouped into specific categories to make the material gathered easier to understand. Although there have been numerous studies focused on student's decision-making process, studies on the decision making process of student-athletes is limited. This literature review examines several studies and the factors they found meaningful.

### **Previous Studies**

This section will discuss different studies that have been conducted identifying influential factors in the decision making process of student-athletes. Appendix A is a summary of the studies including the authors, title of the study, and significance and insignificant factors found in recruiting college athletes to a college.

Trent E. Gabert, Jeffrey L. Hale, and Gregory P. Montalvo (1999) conducted a study surveying 246 first-time freshmen student-athletes from NCAA Division I and II, as well as in the NAIA. This study examined the factors influencing college choice among first-time freshmen student-athletes by institutional type (i.e. NCAA Division I and II and NAIA).

Tracy L. Jordan and Jordan I. Kobritz (2011) did a study consisting of 239 members of varsity softball teams competing in an NCAA Division II conference in the

southwest. The purpose of their study was to determine which factors most influenced the selection of an institution for student-athletes competing on NCAA Division II softball teams.

David B. Klenosky, Thomas J. Templin, and Josh A. Troutman (2001) performed a study sampling 27 NCAA Division I college football players. This empirical study's purpose was to examine the factors influencing the decision making process of collegiate student-athletes.

Nicole R. Letawski, Raymond G. Schneider, Paul M. Pedersen, and Carolyn J. Palmer (2003) conducted a survey with 135 first-year student-athletes enrolled at a large, public, four-year institution, which had more than 400 student-athletes and 25 varsity sports. The purpose of their study was to determine if the factors that influenced the college choice of high level student-athletes were different than research results focusing on non-athletes.

Jeffrey S. Pauline, Gina A Pauline, and Adam Stevens (2004) carried out a study that surveyed 320 collegiate baseball student-athletes from 12 colleges and universities. The purpose of their investigation was to evaluate the factors that may have been influential in the college selection process of baseball student-athletes.

Jeffrey Pauline (2010) did a study surveying 792 male and female NCAA lacrosse student-athletes who participated on teams in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions of the United States. The purpose of the study was to examine factors influencing college selection by NCAA Division I, II, and III lacrosse players.

Barbara C. Reynaud (1998) did a cross-sectional study using a multi-method approach, collecting data using surveys and telephone interviews of 457 Division I

female collegiate volleyball players from 52 universities. The purpose of this study was to identify factors that most influenced prospective female volleyball student-athletes' selection of an NCAA Division I university.

Ray Schneider and Steve Messenger (2002) conducted a study surveying 19 Division I college hockey players. The study examined the impact athletic facilities and other college choice factors had on the recruitment of student-athletes to play Division I college hockey compared to the influence of other college choice factors.

### **Categories: Combining Significant Factors**

After examining these eight studies, the significant factors in each study were compared. Five categories were created based on how the author interpreted the results of these studies and from the author's experience with recruiting. The five categories will be discussed for a better understanding of what makes these important: university (U), athletic program (AP), relationships (R), sports facilities (SF), and recruiting methods (RM).

#### **University.**

The concept of being a student-athlete can lead to a potential student-athlete looking into the academic standing of the potential university or college. The category - university will cover the location of the school, the academic programs available, campus size, appearance of the school, and the facilities provided to students. Table 1 identifies three studies, which ranked favorably factors included in the category, University.

The location of the school can be an important factor in the selection process as some student-athletes and their families may want the student-athlete to stay close to home. The student-athlete could then visit home more often, family and friends would

have the ability to watch the student-athlete perform and visit the student-athlete as well. On the other side, the student-athlete might want to choose a school that is farther away for more independence, a different climate, or to broaden his or her horizons.

The academic programs available are another important aspect of the college selection process. The academic programs and degrees that are offered at the college institution may play a role in the career path the student-athlete wishes to pursue when they graduate. If a student wants to become a teacher and the university or college does not have an education program that could affect the student-athlete's decision to come to that particular college. If a university were to be one of the top business colleges in the country that might play an important role in a student-athlete's decision if they were interested in a future career in business.

The campus size, appearance of buildings, and facilities are also factors to be considered in the selection process. Some student-athletes want to be a part of a large campus with a large population of students; others prefer a small campus, with a small community of learners. Brand new buildings, up to date technology, and facilities such as academic resource centers, tutors, libraries, performing arts centers, wellness centers, student commons areas, and other amenities can appeal to a student-athlete's decision.

The study of college selection factors of students differing from college selection factors of student-athletes showed that the number one factor in the student-athlete decision-making process was degree-program options. Academic support services and type of community that the campus is located in were in the top five most important as well (Letawsky, 2003).

In Pauline's study (2010), academic reputation of the university, availability of academic program or major, and reputation of academic major or program were all in the top five of most influential factors of the selection process for NCAA Division 1, 2, and 3 La Crosse players.

**Table 1:**

*Category: University – Studies Which Included University Related Factors*

Author	Study	Rank
Letawski (2003)	Surveyed 135 first-year student-athletes enrolled at a large, public, four-year institution, which has more than 400 student-athletes and 25 varsity sports.	#1 Degree-Program Options, #3 Academic Support Services
Pauline (2010)	Surveyed 792 male and female NCAA lacrosse student-athletes who participated on teams in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions of the United States.	#2 Academic Reputation of College/University, #4 Availability of Academic Program or Major
Jordan and Kobritz (2011)	239 members of varsity softball teams competing in an NCAA Division II conference in the southwest.	#3 Availability of Degree Program #4 Academic Reputation

### **Athletic program.**

Some athletes may choose a university from a team perspective based on the number of championships the team has won and the level of competition, or look at a university in terms of how many players were drafted or signed to the professional ranks when they finished their career with the university. Being able to play immediately their freshman season may also be of importance to a student-athlete in the selection process.

These are the factors in this category, athletic program. Table 2 identifies three studies which ranked favorably factors included in the category athletic program.

If a team has a history of winning that may be an important factor when compared to a university that has a losing tradition. One major football recruit out of Ohio, noted that the importance of a winning tradition factored in his decision to attend Michigan State University. He explained that the environment gave him that winning tradition feeling, expressing that Michigan State just comes off like winners (Trieu, 2014).

A student-athlete may have thoughts of playing professionally after college, so a university with a history of turning out professional athletes may have an advantage over a university that has zero alumni that have played professionally. The University of Kentucky's Men's basketball program has become a hot bed for sending their players off to the NBA following their college career and that has attracted the attention of potential recruits. Isaiah Briscoe is one of the recruits that was attracted to Kentucky by the allure of the possibility of playing professional basketball after his career at Kentucky. "Coach Calipari has a machine going on with getting point guards to the NBA. John Wall, Eric Bledsoe, Derrick Rose. I can see myself in that mold" (Borzello, 2014).

The opportunity to play right away may be more important than a program with a winning tradition. At a prestigious program, a student-athlete might have to wait until their junior or senior season to be able to contribute or play a significant role. At a program that hasn't won or hasn't had the history of winning, a student-athlete might be able to contribute or play a significant role as early as their freshman season. Playing right away is what lured college basketball recruit Tevin Mack to the University of Texas. Mack said that the University of Texas' pitch on having him come there and play

right away is what sold him on his commitment to attend the University of Texas (Borzello, 2015).

Level of competition and the potential to play early in career ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> in importance, out of 24 decision factors in Jordan and Kobritz's study (2011) of softball student-athletes.

According to Pauline, Pauline, and Stevens (2004) a winning program was the most influential factor in the college selection process of baseball student-athletes. Opportunity to play early in career was second and the tradition of the program ranked fifth.

**Table 2:**

*Category: Athletic Program – Studies Which Included Athletic Program Related Factors*

Author	Study	Rank
Jordan and Kobritz (2011)	239 members of varsity softball teams competing in an NCAA Division II conference in the southwest.	#2 Level of Competition, #6 Potential to Play Early in Career
Pauline, Pauline, and Stevens (2004)	Surveyed 320 collegiate baseball student-athletes from 12 colleges and universities.	#1 Winning Program, #2 Opportunity to Play Early in Career, #5 Tradition of the Athletic Program
Schneider and Messenger (2002)	Surveyed 19 Division I college hockey players.	#1 Opportunity to Play Immediately, #4 School's Sport Traditions

**Relationships.**

It is important in the selection process to think about the people a student-athlete will be spending the most time with during their four years in college. The majority of their time will be spent with their future coaching staff and teammates at whatever

university they choose. A coaching staff in this setting is looked at as the head coach and the assistant coaches involved with the specific sport's program. The coaching staff's relationship with players, the knowledge of the coaching staff, and the coaching style of the coaching staff play an important role in the university selection process.

The coaching staff's relationship with players includes traits such as trust, perspective, toughness, knowledge, and honesty. A student-athlete might find it important that his potential college coach be someone he trusts that is honest with the student-athlete, and has the student-athlete's best interests in mind. When basketball recruit Devearl Ramsey was going through the recruiting process his main focus was finding a school with a head coach who believed in him. Ramsey's high school basketball coach, Tyrone Nichols echoed that statement.

Throughout this whole process, he (Ramsey) was really focused on going with a coach who really believed in him and really wanted him. He didn't want to just be another name on the roster. Nevada did a great job recruiting him all summer long and developing the relationship with him where he really believed what they were saying. He felt like they were genuine. (Eisenberg, 2015).

A coach that is approachable with what some might call an "open door policy" might be a better fit for a student-athlete instead of a coach who keeps to him or herself. A coach that can push the student-athlete to achieve greater things on the sport's field and in the classroom as well as knowledge of their sport could contribute to the decision of the student-athlete.

The knowledge of the coaching staff in terms of the sport they coach could be an important factor. The ability of the coaching staff to improve the skill sets of the players

that they coach is important. The background expertise of the coaching staff such as the level of competition they played, awards earned as a player, or experience and awards as a coach could stand out in the eyes of a potential recruit.

Coaching style consists of how a coach leads his or her particular team. This could include the atmosphere of practices, how much of a time commitment the coach requires of his or her athletes, duration of practices, effort required at practice or games, and how the coaching staff communicates with players. Some potential recruits might want to play for a coach that is laid back and easy going, some might prefer a coach who is more of a disciplinarian, while others might like a combination of both.

Table 3 identifies three studies, which ranked favorably factors included in the category of relationships. First-time student-athletes ranked the head coach as the most influential decision factor (Gabert, 1999). Similar results were found in research involving first- year student-athletes who listed the head coach as the second most important factor in determining school choice (Letawsky et al., 2003). Characteristics related to the head coach and coaching staff were the most frequently mentioned influential attributes for university selection in a study of 27 NCAA Division I male football players (Klenosky, Templin & Troutman, 2001).

Future teammates' personalities, hobbies, values, past connections, and, or familiarity could affect a student-athlete's decision to attend a certain university. One of the most sought after high school football recruits in the country, Terry Godwin, explained just how important future teammates are to him in the recruiting process.

When I go on my visits, I want to spend as much time around the players as possible. I don't want to end up at a school where I don't feel like I belong.

Coaches can tell you about how great it is at their school and how they're one big family, but if you don't get that feeling for yourself, then you know it's not the right place for you. (Crabtree, 2015, p.1)

Penn State University Head Football Coach James Franklin echoed the concept of future teammates playing a major role in the selection process of future student-athletes.

It's funny how much players on your team will go out of their way to tell recruits what it's really like at your school. That's why it's important you have a great relationship and have trust with everybody in your program -- because they can become one of your biggest recruiting tools. (Crabtree, 2015, p.1)

**Table 3:**

*Category: Relationships – Studies Which Included Relationship Related Factors*

Author	Study	Rank
Gabert, Hale, Montalvo (1999)	Surveyed 246 first-time, freshmen student-athletes from NCAA Division I and II, as well as NAIA.	#1 College Head Coach
Jordan and Kobritz (2011)	239 members of varsity softball teams competing in an NCAA Division II conference in the southwest.	#1 Honesty and Sincerity of Staff
Reynaud (1998)	Collected data using surveys and telephone interviews of 457 Division I female collegiate volleyball players from 52 universities.	#3 The Head Coach, #5 Players Presently on Team

## **Sports Facilities**

College athletics are a booming financial industry. Success on the playing field or court allows universities the opportunity to market their university to potential students, sponsors, donors, alumni, and fans.

Former Wichita State University Athletic Director Jim Schaus discussed the importance of athletic facilities.

Quality facilities define future success for athletic programs. They provide the ability for student-athletes to skillfully practice and compete and sports programs to operate at their optimal efficiency. Facilities enhance image and positively affect recruiting, and they impact winning and its corresponding benefits to the university and community. (Wichita State University, 2016, p. 1)

In order to do that, universities are trying to provide the best facilities and accommodations that money can buy to woo potential student athletes. State of the art weight rooms, training rooms, practice facilities, locker rooms, and athlete lounge rooms are becoming in area of competition as each university tries to one up each other with the next jaw dropping creation.

The University of Oregon's Hatfield-Dowlin Complex is a 145,000 square foot facility that cost \$69 million and is dedicated solely to the football team. It is equipped with a weight room, sauna, barber shop, and a 170-seat movie theater (Stack, 2014). Even smaller level universities and colleges may have all turf fields, indoor practice facilities, player lounges, and trophy rooms displaying past successes.

The place where student-athletes will spend a large amount of their time during their collegiate career can affect the outcome of their college decision.

Louisiana State University Head Baseball Coach Paul Mainieri explained the importance of sports facilities in the decision making process of student-athletes.

You see what we and South Carolina did. We both built our stadiums in the same year in 2009 and for the next three years, ourselves and South Carolina won the next three national championships. What happens is when a university is willing to invest in their facility, it sends a very strong message to recruits that baseball means an awful lot to our campus and that makes that campus attractive to a potential recruit. (Wasson, 2015, p. 3)

Table 4 identifies three studies which ranked favorably factors included in the category Sports Facilities. A study that sampled Division 1 college hockey players (Schneider and Messenger 2002) found that the weight room/locker room was tied for the sixth most influential factors for selecting a college, while the home arena/rink was the twelfth influential factor out of 24 college choice factors. Pauline, Pauline, and Stevens' college baseball study (2004) determined that baseball specific facilities were the third most influential factor when choosing a college.

**Table 4:**

*Category: Sports Facilities – Which Included Sports Facilities Related Factors*

Author	Study	Rank
Gabert, Hale, Montalvo (1999)	Surveyed 246 first-time, freshmen student-athletes from NCAA Division I and II, as well as NAIA.	#8 Athletic Facilities, #16 Athletic Training Facilities
Jordan and Kobritz (2011)	239 members of varsity softball teams competing in an NCAA Division II conference in the southwest.	#11 Athletic Facilities Used
Pauline, Pauline, Stevens	Surveyed 320 collegiate	#3 Baseball Specific

(2004)	baseball student-athletes from 12 colleges and universities.	Facilities
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### **Recruiting methods.**

The style of recruiting or method of recruiting is also an important factor in the selection process of student-athletes. This category focuses on scholarships, cost of tuition, how much attention is given to the student-athlete during the recruiting process, the campus visit by the student-athlete and his family, and the technique used to contact the recruit.

Part of the recruiting process for the student-athlete is trying to find a university or college that makes the student-athlete feel wanted or important. Each university or college has their own way of showing the student-athlete how important they are to the university or college. This can be done in the form of scholarship money or by communicating through letters, e-mails, text messages, or phone calls.

University of Alabama Head Football Coach Nick Saban is known as a tireless recruiter willing to pull out all the stops to get the recruits he wants. High School football recruit, Alvin Kamara found out through the mail that Saban wanted Kamara to come to the University of Alabama. Saban sent Kamara 105 letters in one day, each one telling Kamara that Saban wanted Kamara to be a part of the Crimson Tide. Kamara said it was crazy, but he liked it. It also worked, as Kamara signed with Alabama (Davis, 2012, p.1).

Some student-athletes enjoy the numerous phone calls, text messages, e-mails, and letters as it shows the student-athlete just how badly the university would like the student-athlete to come to their school. Other student-athletes might be overwhelmed or possibly turned off by the abundance of attention shown to them. However, lack of

attention by a school could also cause a student-athlete to dismiss that university from their list of potential schools.

The campus visit is an opportunity for the student-athlete and possibly his family to see the campus and university first hand. This can be a crucial step in the decision-making process, as first impressions can make or break a student-athlete's decision to come to a university. During a campus visit, the student-athlete can meet the coaching staff and potential teammates and see the campus, sports facilities, and academic facilities. The student-athlete might also practice with the team, go out to eat with the coaching staff and team members, and visit with academic advisors about potential majors/academic programs offered. The campus visit could be a weekend stay with a potential teammate, a day visit, or a short tour around the campus, making each conversation, encounter, and sight important.

Football recruit Kurtis Brown from Liberty High School took a campus visit to the University of Arizona. While on campus, Brown toured Arizona's Lowell-Stevens Football Facility, watched the team in a spring practice and spoke with Arizona's coaches. He even got to spend some time with UA safety Anthony Mariscal, a teammate from Liberty. From the moment Brown stepped on campus he fell in love with the school, committing to the University of Arizona a few weeks later due to his campus visit (Rosenblatt, 2016).

Scholarship money and cost of tuition are important factors to consider in the selection process as well. The ability for a student-athlete to have a portion or all of their schooling paid for could be a make or break factor. By offering a scholarship to a

student-athlete the university may also be letting the student-athlete know how important they will be to the future of the university's program.

Table 5 identifies three studies, which ranked favorably factors included in the category Recruiting Methods. The offering of a scholarship was the number one selection factor in a study of volleyball players' college selection factors (Reynaud, 1998). Athletic scholarship was the 10<sup>th</sup> most influential factor, while cost of tuition and living expenses was listed as the 13<sup>th</sup> influential factor of 24 factors in a study of college softball selection factors (Jordan and Kobritz, 2011).

**Table 5:**

*Category: Recruiting Methods - Studies Which Included Recruiting Methods Related Factors*

Author	Study	Rank
Jordan and Kobritz (2011)	239 members of varsity softball teams competing in an NCAA Division II conference in the southwest.	#5 Personal Attention, #10 Amount of Athletic Scholarship, #13 Cost of Tuition and Expenses
Reynaud (1998)	Collected data using surveys and telephone interviews of 457 Division I female collegiate volleyball players from 52 universities.	#1 Offering of a Scholarship
Schneider and Messenger (2002)	Surveyed 19 Division I college hockey players.	#1 Athletic Related Financial Aid

## Conclusion

After examining the studies of selection factors and the different sport specific studies in this literature review, an understanding of the process of what is important to student-athletes has evolved. There are some factors that are commonly listed as highly influential factors in each of the studies, but there are also some factors that are more

important in different sports within the various studies. From the literature review, the top overall influential factors seem to be degree programs offered, academic reputation of school, opportunity to play early, head coach and coaching staff, and the offering of a scholarship.

Two of the studies looked at female sport specific sports (volleyball and softball) and the student-athlete's choice factors. In those studies (Reynaud and Jordan and Kobritz), the highly influential factors gravitated toward academic factors and relationships. Coaching staff, degree program options, academic reputation, and future teammates were the most influential factors. The male specific sport studies on baseball, football, and hockey showed that the most influential factors are related to the athletic program and facilities. Opportunity to play, winning program, and sports facilities were among the most influential factors.

The literature review also provided evidence of how each of the categories in this study can be important. The categories of university, athletic program, relationships, sports facilities, and recruiting methods provide a framework for the student-athlete and their decision process.

The next chapter focuses on this study's process of determining the important factors selected for its survey and how the survey was conducted.

### **III. Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

This research study is designed to better understand the factors involved in the decision-making process of a 2015-2016 NCAA Division II baseball team to choose to attend this university. This chapter will cover the participants in the study, the data collection instrument, procedures, and data analysis used to answer the research question.

#### **Sample/Participants**

The participants were 32 male NCAA Division II baseball student-athletes on a baseball team whose university is located in the Midwest region of the United States. This study breaks down the student-athletes by the year they were recruited.

#### **Instrumentation**

The 32 baseball players were surveyed. The survey consisted of four sections. Section 1 was a single multiple-choice question (#1) asking for the player's recruitment year (2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015). This question was asked in order to see if recruiting classes differed on the following questions.

Section 2 of the survey was used to obtain the importance of various decision-making factors. Using the literature review of studies on student-athlete college selection factors, the researcher compiled a list of selection factors. The list included factors that were common in previous studies and new factors that were deemed to be important in the eyes of the researcher. Section 2 of the questionnaire consisted of one question (#2) with 19 factors listed, each was to be rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important).

Section 3 of the survey had two questions. Question #3 was a multiple-choice question asking what method of communication they preferred during the recruiting period.

Section 4 of the survey was four open-ended questions. One question is multiple choice, and one ranking question. Participants were also asked in what year they were recruited in order to see if a trend consisted between same recruiting classes.

#### Protocol

The researcher contacted the Head Baseball Coach of the program being studied, in person, in January 2016, the beginning of their competitive season. The researcher explained in detail the importance of the study and asked for the team's participation in the study. The Head Coach was then asked to sign a document of support for the research, giving players permission to participate in the study (Appendix D). The researcher then used a pilot group of former collegiate baseball players to pilot test the survey questions. After the pilot group's data was collected and their feedback received, revisions to the survey were made. The survey, a consent statement, and protocol were submitted to the university IRB for approval and this was granted. The survey was then entered into the survey administration software Qualtrics. The survey was coded as anonymous so responses were not able to be tracked and a link to the survey was made available. One month into their competitive season, the players were sent an e-mail by the researcher, which included an explanation of the study and a link to the survey.

Attached to the e-mail was the head coach's support letter. Once players clicked the link to the survey, a consent form was presented on the cover page, stating that participation in the study was voluntary and that neither the university nor individual

names were included on the survey. All of the student-athletes completed the survey in two days and the survey was closed two days after activating the survey,

### **Statistical Design and Analysis**

Once the survey was completed, the data was analyzed using the web-based program Qualtrics Survey Software. Section 1 was used as a filter to see if Section 2 through 4 data differed by year of recruitment. The Likert Scale data of Section 2 was summed and the mean, standard deviation, and frequency of each of the 19 factors was determined. Section 3, question 1 was summed and the mean, standard deviation, and frequency of each of the 4 ways of communication was determined. In question 5, the frequency of each recruiting class was determined. The open-ended questions of Section 4 were organized by question. Grounded theory was used. Responses were read looking for common themes across all responses as well as by recruitment year. As a theme developed phrases and sentences related to that theme were identified and highlighted in the same color. Quotes were used as both representative of a theme and as unique thoughts unrelated to other responses.

## IV. Results

This chapter shows the major findings and key takeaways as to what factors were most influential for student-athletes on a college baseball team, in their decision making process to choose the current university. A questionnaire was used to gather data from 31 players on a NCAA Division II Men's baseball team in the Midwest. Of the 32 members of the baseball team surveyed, 31 members responded, reflecting a 96.8% return rate. Information was collected through the web-based program Qualtrics Survey Software.

### Findings

The data for each section of the questionnaire is detailed below. First the results of the entire team will be described, followed by the results by recruiting year if they differed from the entire team.

#### Section 1.

The first question was a demographic question that asked players to identify their recruiting class (year they were recruited to the university: i.e. 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015). This question allowed the researcher to see if any trends existed between different recruiting classes for choosing the current university they attend.

Table 6 below shows that of the 31 members of the baseball team that responded, 2 (6%) came from the 2011 recruiting class, 7 (23%) from the 2012 recruiting class, 7 (23%) from the 2013 recruiting class, 2 (6%) from the 2014 recruiting class, and 13 (42%) came from the 2015 recruiting class.

**Table 6:***Recruiting Class (N=31)*


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Response	Year	Frequency	Percent
1	2011	2	6
2	2012	7	23
3	2013	7	23
4	2014	2	6
5	2015	13	42

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**Section 2.**

Question 2 of the survey asked each baseball player how important 19 selection factors were in choosing their university. The question used a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). The higher the mean score, the more influential the selection factor was for the student-athletes. Factors fit into five categories, University (U), Athletic Program (AP), Relationships (R), Sports Facilities (SF), and Recruiting Methods (RM).

In Table 7 below, the results of the factors are first listed by showing all recruiting classes combined results. As indicated in Table 2, the five most influential factors were Coaching Staff's Relationship With Players (4.16), Coaching Staff's Knowledge of Baseball (4.10), Tradition of Program (4.06), and Potential to Play Early in Career (4.06) and Level of Competition (Division 1, 2, 3, NAIA, Junior College) tied for fifth. The five least influential factors of the selection process were Scholarship Money (2.71), Potential to Play Professional Baseball After College (2.77), Academic Reputation (3.10), Academic Resources (3.10), and Cost of Tuition (3.29).

The two most influential factors Coaching Staff's Relationship With Players (4.16) and Coaching Staff's Knowledge of Baseball (4.10) fall into the Relationships category. Tradition of Program (Success), Potential to Play Early in Career, and Level of Competition (Division 1, 2, 3, NAIA, Junior College) are part of the Athletic Programs category. Athletic Facilities (Baseball Field, Weight Room, Locker Room, Training Room, Practice Facility) was the seventh most influential factor and the most influential factor of the Sports Facilities category. Campus Visit (3.77) was the eighth most influential factor and most influential factor of the Recruiting Methods category. The University category first appeared at number ten with the factor of Location of the University or College (3.58).

**Table 7:**

*Factors Influencing Student-Athletes (All Recruiting Classes) ranked by mean score*

*(N=31)*

#	Question	Likert Scale					Total Responses	Mean
		Not Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important		
14	Coaching Staff's Relationship With Players	1	2	1	14	13	31	4.16
15	Coaching Staff's Knowledge of Baseball	1	2	3	12	13	31	4.10
8	Program (Success)	1	0	3	19	8	31	4.06
7	Potential to Play Early in Career	2	1	5	11	11	30	3.93
6	Level of Competition (Division 1, 2, 3, NAIA, Junior College)	1	1	2	24	3	31	3.87
16	Coaching Style	2	2	6	9	12	31	3.87
17	Athletic Facilities (Baseball Field, Weight Room, Locker Room, Training Room, Practice Facility)	1	3	4	15	8	31	3.84
18	Campus Visit (First Impression)	1	4	4	14	8	31	3.77
19	Personal Attention (Coaching Staff/University Making You Feel Important)	4	2	2	12	11	31	3.77
5	Location of the University or College	3	1	6	17	4	31	3.58

	Likert Scale	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important	Total Responses	Mean
#	Question							
9	Campus Size/Type of Community	2	1	11	13	4	31	3.52
4	Academic Programs/ Majors Offered	2	4	6	16	3	31	3.45
10	Attractiveness of Campus (Appearance)	2	3	8	16	2	31	3.42
3	Future Teammates	5	2	5	13	5	30	3.37
2	Cost of Tuition	1	9	2	18	1	31	3.29
11	Academic Resources	3	6	9	11	2	31	3.10
12	Academic Reputation	3	4	13	9	2	31	3.10
13	Potential to Play Professional Baseball After Attending University	9	3	8	8	3	31	2.77
1	Scholarship Money	6	9	6	8	2	31	2.71

These results were also broken down by each recruiting class in order to identify any possible trends.

The 2011 recruiting class consisting of two members listed the Campus Visit (4.50, RM) and Personal Attention (Coaching Staff/University Making You Feel Important) (4.50, RM) as the most influential factors and Scholarship Money (1.00, RM) and Potential to Play Professional Baseball After Attending University (1.50, AP) as the least influential factors.

The 2012 recruiting class consisting of seven members listed the Tradition of Program (Success) (4.57, AP) and Potential to Play Early in Career (4.29, AP) as the most influential factors and Future Teammates (3.00, R) and Potential to Play Professional Baseball After Attending University (3.00, AP) as the least influential factors.

The 2013 recruiting class consisting of seven members listed Potential to Play Early in Career (4.71, AP), Academic Programs Offered (4.14, U), Coaching Staff's Relationship With Players (4.14, R), and Coaching Staff's Knowledge of Baseball (4.14,

R) as the most influential factors and Scholarship Money (3.14, RM) and Future Teammates (3.14, R) as the least influential factors.

The 2014 recruiting class consisting of two members listed seven factors as highly influential. Coaching Staff's Relationship With Players, Coaching Staff's Knowledge of Baseball, Coaching Style, Campus Visit (First Impression), Personal Attention (Coaching Staff/University Making You Feel Important), Level of Competition (Division 1, 2, 3, NAIA, Junior College), and Potential to Play Early in Career. The least influential factors were Scholarship Money (2.00, RM) and Cost of Tuition (2.00, RM).

The 2015 recruiting class consisting of 13 members listed Coaching Staff's Knowledge of Baseball (4.31, R) and Coaching Staff's Relationship With Players (4.23, R) as the most influential factors and Potential to Play Professional Baseball After Attending University (2.31, AP) and Scholarship Money (2.38, RM) as least influential factors.

### **Section 3.**

Section 3 consisted of two questions #3 and #4.

Question 3 of the survey asked each baseball player what method of communication they preferred during the recruiting period by ranking four approaches to communication (Phone, Text Message, Letter, E-Mail) in order of preference #1-4. The lower the mean for the type of communication indicated the method of communication was more preferred. 29 players responded to this question.

In Table 8 below, the results of the preferred method of communication are listed showing all the recruiting classes combined. The preferred method of communication in order was by Phone with a mean of 1.41, Text Message (2.28), Letter (3.07), and E-mail

(3.24). The results broken down by each recruiting class also showed that communicating by phone call was the preferred method of communication.

Table 8:

*Preferred Method of Contact (All Recruiting Classes) ranked by mean rank (N=29)*

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Method	Mean	Std Deviation	Responses
Phone Call	1.41	0.73	29
Text Message	2.28	0.92	29
Letter	3.07	0.92	29
E-Mail	3.24	0.79	29

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Question 4 of the survey asked each baseball player when they were being recruited, how often they preferred to be contacted by choosing one of the allotted times. The higher the percentage of choice would indicate the preferred frequency of contact.

In Table 9 below, the results of how often the recruit would prefer to be contacted are listed showing all the recruiting classes combined. Being contacted weekly (18, 58%) was the most preferred frequency of contact, followed by Every Other Week (10, 32%), Monthly (3, 10%), Daily and Every Other Day at 0, 0%.

**Table 9:**

*Preferred Frequency of Contact (All Recruiting Classes) (N=31)*

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Response	Answer	Responses	Percent
1	Daily	0	0
2	Every Other Day	0	0
3	Weekly	18	58
4	Every Other Week	10	32
5	Monthly	3	10

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The results were also broken down by each recruiting class showing that the 2011 and 2012 recruiting classes preferred being contacted Every Other Week, while the more recent recruiting classes of 2013, 2014, and 2015 preferred Weekly communication.

#### **Section 4.**

Section 4 had two sets of two open-ended questions. Question #5 and #6 asked the baseball players about the most and least influential factor in choosing their university. Questions #7 and #8 asked the players to identify the most attractive and least attractive factor from a competing university.

In question 5, each baseball player was asked to describe the most influential factor for choosing their current university.

The results of the question are first broken down by all recruiting classes and look for commonalities among the responses. The most influential factor for choosing their current university in order of frequency were personal attention/visit, coaching staff, winning program, opportunity to play, and location of the university. One subject stated that the calls and letters from coaches made him feel like the coaches really wanted him (Personal Attention/RM). Another stated that the university was close to home and that he was very close to his family, so it made it easy for him to go home, as well as have his family come to games (Location/U).

No significant differences or similarities were found when breaking down the recruiting classes. The same common responses listed as the most influential factors were listed throughout each class.

In question 6, each baseball player was asked to describe the least influential factor for choosing their current university.

The results of the question were first broken down by all recruiting class and commonalities were identified. The least influential factors for choosing their current university in order of frequency were scholarship money, academic reputation, degree program options, and cost of tuition. One subject stated that scholarship money was the least influential factor because Division II has lower scholarships to offer so they knew they would not receive a lot of money. Another subject stated that the school's academics didn't matter much to them because at that time in their life, all they wanted to do was play baseball.

No significant differences or similarities were found when breaking down the recruiting classes. The same common responses listed as the least influential factors were listed throughout each class.

In question 7, each baseball player was asked to describe the most attractive factor from a competing university.

The results of the question are first broken down by all recruiting classes and look for commonalities among the responses. The most attractive factors from a competing university in order of frequency included scholarship money, athletic program's success, and location of the school. One subject stated that they were offered more scholarship money, which would have helped with student loans and cut down on tuition. Another subject stated that other schools had winning traditions which was attractive to them because winning was important to them.

No significant differences or similarities were found when breaking down the recruiting classes. The same common responses listed as the most attractive factors were listed throughout each class.

In question 8, each baseball player was asked to describe the least attractive factor from a competing university.

The results of the question are first broken down by all recruiting classes and look for commonalities among the responses. The most common responses for the least attractive factor from a competing university in order of most common responses included the location of the school, poor relationship with coaching staff, athletic facilities, and not having the opportunity to play right away. One subject stated the distance from home was too far. Another stated that the least attractive factor from a competing university was the lack of interest and personal relationship with the head coach and coaches recruiting him.

No significant differences or similarities were found when breaking down the recruiting classes. The same common responses listed as the least attractive factors were listed throughout each class.

## V. Discussion

### Summary

This study looked at the decision-making process of student-athletes by identifying the most important selection factors they consider when choosing a university or college. There has not been a substantial amount of studies that look at the selection factors of college baseball players and even fewer studies that go into detail about recruiting methods and reasons for not choosing competing universities. Reviewing the literature shows how difficult the decision can be for student-athletes going through the college selection process. The literature presented an assortment of selection factors that influence student-athletes with each study showing different sports, gender, and age. The researcher then deciphered from the various studies and through his own experience what factors held high influence on student-athletes. He then produced a survey that was given to 32 members of a NCAA Division II baseball program located in the Midwest. 31 members of the team responded and the data was analyzed.

Findings of the study showed that there are many factors that influence the baseball players surveyed in this study. The research also showed that there are differences in the different recruiting classes as to how often to be contacted and the preferred method of communication. However, the selection factors that have the highest influence or least influence as to why they chose this particular university were similar throughout all of the recruiting classes. The findings from this research will be helpful for this university's future recruiting, other university's baseball program's recruiting, and aid in further research on this subject matter.

## Conclusions

The two most important parts of the questionnaire focused on what selection factors influenced college baseball players the most and least when selecting/choosing a university. This information provided feedback on the factors universities and coaching staff's should concentrate on when recruiting future student-athletes. This information was gathered through a Likert-Scale question and later through open-ended questions.

Of the 19 selection factors listed on the survey, the team as a whole listed the six most influential factors (and their mean score) as: 1) Coaching Staff's Relationship With Players (4.16), 2) Coaching Staff's Knowledge of Baseball (4.10), 3) Tradition of Program (4.06), 4) Potential to Play Early in Career (4.06) and tying for fifth Level of Competition (Division 1, 2, 3, NAIA, Junior College) and Coaching Style.

The two most influential factors Coaching Staff's Relationship With Players (4.16) and Coaching Staff's Knowledge of Baseball (4.10) as well as the fifth factor, Coaching Style, all fall into the Relationships category. This demonstrates that the study's baseball recruits viewed relationships as extremely important, specifically, the coaching staff's relationship with players as being the most important factor in selecting this university. Having a coach that has traits such as trust, perspective, toughness, knowledge, and honesty are some of the qualities the student-athletes look for in a coach's relationship with their players. The feeling that the coaching staff has the best interests of the student-athlete in mind is also important.

The coaching staff's knowledge of baseball was the second most influential factor. This demonstrates that baseball recruits thought it was very important to have a coaching staff that has the ability to improve their skillset and has the background

expertise and experience that can help the athlete be successful at the college level. The coaching staff or head coach was in the top 5 most influential factor of almost every literature study looked at for this study.

The other three factors in the top six were part of category Athletic Programs; these were Tradition of Program (Success), Potential to Play Early in Career, and Level of Competition (Division 1, 2, 3, NAIA, Junior College) are part of the Athletic Programs category. These results showed that baseball recruits preferred to go to a program that has been known to be successful demonstrated by conference titles, winning seasons, and awards obtained. All three of these factors were also 3 of the top 6 factors in the baseball study (Pauline, Pauline, Stevens, 2004).

The Potential to Play Early in Career signifies that the baseball recruits wanted have the opportunity to play right when they got on campus instead of having to red-shirt or sit on the bench behind players that would be playing ahead of them. The level of play factor indicates that the Division II level of competition was an important choice factor when deciding between the different levels of play.

The five least influential factors of the selection process( and there mean score) were Scholarship Money (2.71), Potential to Play Professional Baseball After College (2.77), Academic Reputation (3.10), Academic Resources (3.10), and Cost of Tuition (3.29).

The least influential factor of the selection process was Scholarship Money. That shows that additional money was not important in influencing the baseball recruits to come to this university. This could be due to the level of play. This study examined an NCAA Division II team where scholarship money can be offered, but in small amounts.

Scholarship Money was listed in many of the studies as a significant factor in the selection process and not one study listed Scholarship Money as insignificant. This could be due to the majority of the studies examining Division I universities and/or large universities.

The Potential to Play Professional Baseball After College was the next least influential factor signifying that professional baseball as a career was not a significant factor in the decision-making process. Only in one of the literature studies (Schneider and Messenger, 2002) was The Potential to Play Professional Sports a top 5 influential factor in the decision making process. That particular study examined Division I hockey players. The opportunity to play professional sports could also be attributed to the level of play as the NCAA Division II level does not produce as many professional athletes as the Division I level.

Academic Reputation and Academic Resources were also at the bottom of influencing factors indicating that the academic opinion of the school and its resources to help students become successful academically were not as important as other factors. In the literature review, all studies that were male sport only studies showed the same results for Academic Reputation and Academic Resources. Male sport studies main focus was on sports related aspects of the university and were not as influenced by academics. Female sports studies, non-athlete studies, and combinations of female and male sport studies showed academics as very influential in the decision-making process.

Although Cost of Tuition can have an impact on a college student's life, it was not an important factor for choosing this particular university. The literature studies did not list Cost of Tuition as either extremely influential or insignificant.

In breaking down the baseball team by their recruiting classes, each class had a different set of 5 most influential factors, but all but one class had Scholarship Money and Potential to Play Professional Baseball After Attending University as their least influential factors. This suggests that players did not value scholarship money and the opportunity to play professional baseball as influential factors in their decision-making process.

The 2011 recruiting class consisting of two members listed the Campus Visit (4.50, RM) and Personal Attention (Coaching Staff/University Making You Feel Important) (4.50, RM) as the most influential factors, which shows that the feeling of being important and the impression of the campus visit were the main reasons for choosing their university.

The 2012 recruiting class consisting of seven members listed the Tradition of Program (Success) (4.57, AP) and Potential to Play Early in Career (4.29, AP) as the most influential factors. The previous season this university had success so that might be what attributed to this recruiting class making the decision to attend this university.

The 2013, 2014, and 2015 recruiting classes listed factors relating to the coaching staff as the most influential factors for choosing this university. During this time a new coach may have been added to the staff, the coaching staff might have been more approachable to the recruits, or the next generation of recruits might value relationships more than other factor categories such as athletic program, sports facilities, university, and recruiting methods.

The baseball team was also asked to describe the most influential factor and least influential factor for choosing their current university. The results were similar to the

findings of the Likert-Scale question but with more elaborate answers. The open-ended questions provided more feedback as to the most influential and least influential factors, allowing players to answer with why these factors were important or not important to them.

A second area of the student-athlete college selection process looked at the preferred method of communication. There were no studies in the literature review showing information about a preference for methods of communication with student-athletes. With this information, universities and coaching staff's are provided with what method works best for communication with future recruits. The baseball team as a whole preferred to be contacted by phone call, followed by text, letter, and e-mail. The feeling with that order is that the phone call is more personable, making the recruit feel important. Worth noting is that each method of communication was ranked number one, by at least one member of the team. That could be interpreted that each method of communication can be used to communicate with the student-athlete, but the majority of communication should be through phone calls and text messaging.

A third area of the student-athlete college selection process identified how often student-athletes preferred to be contacted. No research in the literature review provided insight on frequency of contact by universities or coaching staffs. This study provides universities and coaching staffs information on how much communication is preferred by student-athletes. A coaching staff doesn't want to turn off a recruit by overwhelming the recruit with phone calls and letters, but the coaching staff also doesn't want the recruit to feel as if they are not important to the future of the program or university.

The members of the baseball team as a whole preferred to be contacted weekly, with every other week the second preferred frequency of contact. This demonstrates that daily and every other day are too frequent for communication and monthly is not enough communication.

The data separated by recruiting class, showed that the 2011 and 2012 recruiting classes preferred being contacted every other week, while the recruiting classes of 2013, 2014, and 2015 preferred weekly communication. This indicates a trend that the younger generations of student-athletes prefer greater contact-on weekly communication.

The last areas of the student-athlete college selection process set out to provide information as to what competing universities are succeeding and failing at in the recruiting process. No research was provided in the literature review on competing universities and recruiting methods. Baseball team members were asked what the most attractive factor and least attractive factor was from a competing university. This information provided the current university with a framework of do's and don'ts in the recruiting process.

As a whole, baseball members responded that the most influential factors from competing universities included scholarship money, success of the program, and location of the university. Compared to their current university this shows that the scholarship money was a deciding factor in considering a competing university, but other factors at their current university outweighed that scholarship money.

The least attractive factor from a competing university was the location of the school, poor relationship with the coaching staff, and lack of opportunity to play. These unattractive factors can be paired with the most influential factors (coaching staff and

opportunity to play early in career) as to why the baseball team members chose to come to their current university.

### **Recommendations**

The research indicates that members of the Division II NCAA baseball team are influenced by specific factors of the college selection process. This information obtained can help this university's coaching staff as well as other college baseball programs and recruiters to improve their recruiting strategies. The following recommendations are made based on the information gathered from this study.

1. Understand that student-athletes have an abundance of choice factors that could impact their decision to attend a university. This study examined 19 selection factors and the literature review touched on many more. It is critical for the coaching staff to be aware of all of the student-selection factors, but not to obsess over all of the factors.
2. Educate your coaching staff about the categories of selection factors and highlight the most significant factors from this study and literature review. Examine your university, athletic program, recruiting methods, sports facilities, and relationships to see how you can incorporate these categories and factors to fit your specific university and program.
3. Be knowledgeable about your program, university, and sport. Throughout this research paper, studies have shown that coaching staff's knowledge of sport, tradition of success, and degree program options are important to future recruits. Put in the time to gain knowledge on these categories so you are confident and an expert on your program and university.

4. Know the importance of having a quality coaching staff. Having a good rapport with players by showing them you care, being knowledgeable about your sport, and having the trust of your players (they know that you have their best interests in mind) is extremely important. Results from the survey show that the most influential factors for choosing the university was the coaching staff's relationship with players. According to this study, player/coach relationship is becoming more and more influential in the decision-making process as shown by the latest recruiting classes (2013, 2014, and 2015).
5. Understand the significance of communication with recruits. This study demonstrated that personal attention/feeling wanted was an influential factor in the decision-making process as evidence with the 2011 and 2014 recruiting classes. Coaches, take the time to get to know your recruits and ask questions to find out what they're looking for in a future school. After their campus visit, ask them what they liked or disliked about the visit, this will allow you to concentrate on certain selection factors that are specifically important to that recruit.
6. Develop a contact log for communicating with recruits. This study shows that communication by phone call was the preferred method of communication and weekly communication was the preferred frequency of communication for student-athletes. Coaches should introduce yourself with a phone call and log the date and time they communicated with the recruit. Communicate every week with either a phone call, text message, letter, or e-mail to show the recruit how important they are to the future success of your program.

7. Be aware of how your university and program compares to other competing universities. This study showed that recruits can be turned off by certain selection factors such as a poor relationship with the coaching staff. Simply asking recruits how their visit or contact with a competing university was, may give you information as to what that recruit is attracted or deterred by. A competing university may have more scholarship money, but your university's cost of tuition may be lower. Their athletic facilities might look nicer, but your location and proximity to the recruit's home might be more attractive. There are some selection factors that your program can't control such as athletic facilities or degree programs offered by your university. Concentrate on the selection factors that are significant that you can control.
8. Understand the importance of the campus visit. The first impression of your coaching staff, the university, the athletic facilities, and your players will be instrumental in the process of convincing a recruit that your university is where they should spend the next four years of their life. Remember the student-athlete's need to feel important and show enthusiasm that the recruit took the time and travel to visit your university. Put a sign up in the locker room welcoming the player and his family, have players interact with the recruit at practice, and have the coaching staff take the time to give the recruit and his family a tour of the campus while explaining where they see the recruit fitting in their program.

### **Future Research**

1. Conduct a study on recruits at different levels of competition such as NCAA Division I, III, NAIA, and Junior Colleges. This study focused on a NCAA

- Division II baseball program in the Midwest in order to examine one specific university's recruiting plan. Replicating this study with schools at different levels would determine if the factors are influenced by level of play.
2. There are limitless factors that could play a role in the selection process of student-athletes. Not all factors were included in this survey. Another study could determine if additional factors left out of this survey are of significant importance.
  3. Examine the student-athlete selection process from a coaching staff's perspective. Find out what college coaches think are the most significant factors in the selection process of future recruits.
  4. The instrument used in this study was a survey. The majority of information gathered was acquired through quantitative data. A qualitative study using focus groups could have provided more information as to the reasons why some factors were more influential than others.
  5. As time goes on, further research may be necessary due to changes in culture, economic change, athletic trends, and government policies causing the selection factors to change and become more or less significant than in the past.

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### Appendix A: Summary of Findings from Eight Studies Reviewed

Author (s) Year	Title	Study	Significant Factors	Insignificant Factors
Gabert, Hale, and Montalvo (1999)	Differences in College Choice Factors Among Freshmen Student-Athletes	Surveyed 246 first-time, freshmen student-athletes from NCAA Division I and II, as well as NAIA.	Head Coach, Location of School, Opportunity to Play, Degree Programs, and Academic Support Services.	School Colors, TV Exposure, Friends, Teammates, On-Campus Dorms.
Jordan and Kobritz (2011)	University Selection Factors For Division II Softball Student-Athletes	239 members of varsity softball teams competing in an NCAA Division II conference in the southwest.	Honesty/ Sincerity of the Coaching Staff, Level of Competition, Degree Programs, Academic Reputation, Personal Attention to Student-Athlete by Coaching Staff.	Friends Attending Same Institution, Opinions of Close Friends, Weather in Geographic Region, Location to Family, and Attraction to Area.
Klenosky, Templin, and Troutman (2001)	Recruiting Student-Athletes: A Means-End Investigation of School-Choice Decision Making	Sampled 27 NCAA Division I college football players	Characteristics Related to the Head Coach and Coaching Staff, Schedule, Facilities Available,	Friend on the Team, Belonging, Play in a Bowl Game, Get a Good Job, and Academics.

			Opportunity to Play, Location.	
Letawski, Palmer, Pedersen, and Schneider (2003)	Factors Influencing the College Selection Process of Student-Athletes: Are Their Factors Similar to Non-Athletes	Surveyed 135 first-year student-athletes enrolled at a large, public, four-year institution, which has more than 400 student-athletes and 25 varsity sports.	Degree Programs, Head Coach, Academic Support Services, Type of Community in Which the Campus is Located, and the School's Sports Traditions.	College Choice of Friends, Prospect of Television Exposure, Non-Athletic Related Financial Aid, School Colors, Opinions of High School Teammates.
Pauline, Pauline, and Stevens (2004)	Factors Influencing College Selection by NCAA Division I, II, and III Baseball Student-Athletes	Surveyed 320 collegiate baseball student-athletes from 12 colleges and universities.	Winning Program, Opportunity to Play Early in Career, Baseball Specific Facilities, Tradition of the Program	Religious Affiliation of School, Knowing Other Athletes at the School, Having Other Friends at the School, Extracurricular Activities, Knowing Someone on the Team.
Pauline (2010)	Factors Influencing College Selection by NCAA Division I, II, and III La Crosse Players	Surveyed 792 male and female NCAA lacrosse student-athletes who participated on teams in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions of the United States.	Career Opportunities, Academic Reputation of College, Overall Reputation of College, School Offers Your Specific Major of Interest, Reputation of Academic Program/Major.	Number of Alumni in Professional Sports, Know Athletes on the Team, Media Coverage, Ethnic and/or Gender Ratio of the University, Have Friends at the University
Reynaud (1998)	Factors influencing prospective female volleyball student-athletes' selection of an NCAA Division I university: Towards a more informed recruitment	Collected data using surveys and telephone interviews of 457 Division I female collegiate volleyball players from 52 universities.	Offering of a Scholarship, Academic Reputation of a School, Head Coach, Availability of Preferred Academic Major, Players Presently on the Team.	

	process			
Schneider and Messenger (2002)	The Impact of Athletic Facilities on the Recruitment of Potential Student-Athletes	Surveyed 19 Division I college hockey players.	Opportunity to Play Immediately, Athletic-Related Financial Aid, Perceived Future Professional Sporting Opportunities, School's Sports Traditions, and the Location.	Television Exposure, Residential Facilities, School's Won/Loss Record From Previous Year, School's Colors, and College Choice of Your High School Friends.

## Appendix B: Survey Instrument

Q1 What recruiting class are you from? (Transfer students would be the year you came to this university)

- 2011 (1)
- 2012 (2)
- 2013 (3)
- 2014 (4)
- 2015 (5)

Q2 How important were each of the following factors in choosing the university you are currently attending?

	Not Important (1)	Somewhat Important (2)	Neutral (3)	Important (4)	Very Important (5)
Scholarship Money (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cost of Tuition (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Future Teammates (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academic Programs/Majors Offered (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Location of the University or College (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Level of Competition (Division 1, 2, 3, NAIA, Junior College) (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Potential to Play Early in Career (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tradition of Program (Success) (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Campus Size/Type of Community (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attractiveness of Campus (Appearance) (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academic Resources (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academic Reputation (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Potential to Play Professional Baseball After Attending University (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coaching Staff's Relationship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

With Players (14)					
Coaching Staff's Knowledge of Baseball (15)	<input type="radio"/>				
Coaching Style (16)	<input type="radio"/>				
Athletic Facilities (Baseball Field, Weight Room, Locker Room, Training Room, Practice Facility) (17)	<input type="radio"/>				
Campus Visit (First Impression) (18)	<input type="radio"/>				
Personal Attention (Coaching Staff/University Making You Feel Important) (19)	<input type="radio"/>				

Q3 When you were being recruited, what method of communication did you prefer?  
(Rank the following in order of preference)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Text Message (1)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Letter (2)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail (3)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Call (4)

Q4 When you were being recruited, how often did you prefer to be contacted? (Choose one)

- Daily (1)  
 Every Other Day (2)  
 Weekly (3)  
 Every Other Week (4)  
 Monthly (5)

Q5 During your recruitment, describe the most influential factor for choosing your current university and why?

Q6 During your recruitment, describe the least influential factor for choosing your current university and why?

Q7 During your recruitment, describe the most attractive factor from a competing university and why?

Q8 During your recruitment, describe the least attractive factor from a competing university and why?

### **Appendix C: Consent Form**

This research study is designed to better understand the factors involved in the decision-making process of a 2015-2016 NCAA Division II baseball team as to why you chose to attend this university. Participation will require approximately 30 minutes. There are no appreciable risks or benefits from participating in this study. Only the recruiting class you came to the university in will be used as identification. Participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time. If you agree to participate, responding to the questions constitutes your consent. If you have any questions, contact researcher Matt O'Brien at 507-459-2124, faculty advisor Dr. George Morrow at 507-285-7131, or the Human Protections Administrator Brett Ayers at 507-457-5519. This project has been reviewed by the WSU Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects.

## Appendix D: IRB Approval



Winona State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections  
 Administrator Maxwell 155 Winona, MN 55987

507.457.5519 or [bayers@winona.edu](mailto:bayers@winona.edu)

DATE:

TO: FROM:

PROJECT TITLE: SUBMISSION TYPE:

ACTION: REVIEW TYPE:

April 4, 2016

Matt O'Brien, MS Winona State University IRB

[878345-2] Student-athletes College Selection Process Revision

APPROVED Exempt Review

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this research study. The Winona State University IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years. Changes in the study must be reported and any revisions to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. All serious and unexpected events, non-compliance issues, or complaints must also be reported to this office. For all reports, please use the report form in IRBNet Forms and Templates or Document Library and refer to the file reports (if required)

section in the "How To" document.

If this study period is longer than one year, this project requires continuing review by this office on an annual basis. Again, please use the report form in the IRBNet Forms and Templates or Document Library and refer to the file reports (if required) section in the "How To" document.

If you have any questions, please contact the Human Protections Administrator at 507.457.5519 or

[bayers@winona.edu](mailto:bayers@winona.edu). Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within the Winona State University IRB records.

## Appendix E: Head Coach Support Letter



## WINONA STATE UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

Date: 3/30/16

Winona State University Head Baseball Coach Kyle Pooch, has given the 2015-2016 Winona State University Baseball team permission to participate in Matt O'Brien's master's research into the student-athlete decision making process of selecting a university or college. Coach Pooch guarantees that a subject's decision not to participate in, or a decision to withdraw from, the study will not affect the subject's current or future relationship with Coach Pooch. Coach Pooch understands a statement to that effect will be included in any informed consent document or verbal informed consent procedure used in the course of conducting the study.

Sincerely,

**WINONA**  
STATE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

P. O. Box 5838 • IWC #159 • WINONA, MN 55987 • 507.457.5210

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