

Denied: The limited financial decision making responsibility of SWAs

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Abstract 248**

Since the conception of Title IX in 1972, the proportion of women in the governance of intercollegiate athletics has decreased dramatically (Acosta & Carpenter, 2006). The Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) position is an attempt by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) to increase and guarantee female involvement/representation in decision-making processes (Hawes, 2002; NCAA, 1991). However, the degree of involvement varies among athletic departments. Because the role of the SWA is not clearly defined by the NCAA, athletic departments take it upon themselves to interpret the guidelines set out by the NCAA (Copeland, 2005). Thus, the SWA at one institution may not have the same job responsibilities as her counterpart at another institution.

Previous research has indicated that career opportunities in intercollegiate athletics are limited if the individual does not possess experience with financial decisions and budgets (Grappendorf, Lough, & Griffin, 2004; Tiell, 2004). Claussen and Lehr (1999) found women who are assigned to the SWA position are often merely assigned to comply with the NCAA. Additionally, women are more likely to be found in support positions such as compliance, academic advising, and life skills (Whisenant, Pederson, & Obenour (2002); hence, they often lack experience or the opportunity to develop financial and budget skills.

This study sought to explore the actual versus desired levels of participative decision making among SWAs (N = 269) in various financial areas, as well as gather qualitative data through open-ended questions. The quantitative analyses were performed using STATA statistical package, version 9.0 (StataCorp, 2006) which revealed SWAs do want more participation in financial decision-making processes. The analyses consisted of comparing actual and preferred participation in administrative decisions using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). In each of the decision areas (operations, budgeting, capital outlay, salary considerations, media broadcast contracts, and sponsorship advertising), a significant main effect was found in which SWAs indicated a desire for greater participation in decision making. Additionally, the open-ended questions were coded and analyzed using Atlas/ti 5 (Atlas/ti, 2007). SWAs (n = 135) were first asked "Do you feel as though you have the same amount of decision making in men's sports as you do women's?" While 48.9% (n = 66) of the responses indicated they are involved with most decisions regarding decision-making for both men's and women's sports, 28.9% (n = 39) believe they are excluded or have little input when it comes to men's sport decisions. One woman commented that "Decisions happen all the time that I'm completely excluded from, even if they are in areas that directly affect my job." Furthermore, 14.1% (n = 19) of responses indicate their decision making involvement is limited by revenue sports, the sports they oversee, or a male coach of a team. One woman said, "Female coaches speak to me about budgets. Male coaches don't except those that coach women's teams." Another SWA commented "I think it is not as much a question of the gender difference but a difference between high revenue (basketball) sports and nonrevenue sports. I have less decision making power with high revenue sports." Lastly, 8.1% (n = 11) indicated some other reason for lack of involvement (e.g., the institution is all female). Some SWAs (n = 73) decided to elaborate on their position when asked "Is there any further information or insight you would like to provide regarding financial decisions at your institution?" Even though many SWAs responded to the previous question that they were involved with decisions in both men's and women's sports, 56.2% (n = 41) they do not have any financial decision making responsibility. While some of these responses blamed the "good ol' boys club," others claimed they are "SWA in title only". One person said, "My SWA role is used mainly as a person to receive mail for the SWA. I have no decision making role and I'm actually looked down upon by others in my department for having this title!" Only 23.3% (n = 17) of responses claimed they have input with respect to financial decisions. One woman responded, "Since hiring a female Athletic Director, what once was a very inequitable area for our department has become very equitable." Additionally, 16.4% (n = 12) provide some other reason or advice for SWAs. Finally, 4.1% (n = 3) said they were new to the position and needed more time before they could answer this question. Overall, these results indicate that SWAs are not getting the experience they need that could assist in career advancement, and the comments provide insight and depth to the quantitative data. Implications for SWAs and career progression without financial decision making experiences will be further discussed.