Examining Internal Factors for Recruiting Student Athletes at HBCUs

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The college choice process involves a wide variety of tactical decisions; the probability that a student will make an informed and personally logical choice is low (Abell, 2003). It seems the day of simply offering scholarships to potential student-athletes has passed, given that the competition is too great between colleges and universities. Killio, (1995), Poock, Marick and Hossler (1996), Talbot, Maier, and Rushlau, (1996), along with Poock and Love, (2001) explored factors persuading general student populations of various colleges and universities to choose a specific institution. There have been only eight (8) studies focusing on students making HBCU choices and the most recent were Foley (1996) and Hazzard (1996). The choice of college can be one of the most difficult decisions of anyone's career. Student-athletes have to consider a wider base of characteristics than the general student population. Colleges, coaches, and central plus athletic administration must address the assistance in making the college choice for student-athletes. The choice of a college that a student-athlete makes is one of the most important life changing decisions for that young adult. Understanding the internal factors affecting the college choice would help the students and college Recruiter to attract the best quality students possible.

The purpose of this study was to understand the internal factors affecting the college choice and the decision making process for student athletes at HBCUs. The study focused on areas such as overall choice factors of student-athletes by institution type, conferences, gender, scholarship versus non-scholarship, and amount of scholarship funding awarded.

A sample of different institutions (n=21), from two different NCAA Division I Athletic Conferences, a purposive convenient sample of student athletes (N=300) were surveyed using the Student-Athlete College Choice Profile (Gabert, Hale, & Motalvo, 1999). The surveys were distributed to the participants at each school during the fall season. A quantitative research design, non-experimental, using descriptive statistics was employed for this study. This design uses group comparison as a means to explain differences. The survey measured responses using a 5-point Likert scale, with “1” indicating “no influence” and “5” indicating an “extremely high influence.” The questions were rank-ordered by using the Wilcoxon t-test for non-parametric statistics. The data was computed, and the mean response for each of the survey’s 24 items were presented. Overall, the results indicated the three most influential internal factors affecting college choice were: a) Degree Programs, b) Head Coach and c) Opportunity to Play. Furthermore, HBCU coaches and administrators should equally consider their abilities to communicate both sport-related knowledge and the institution’s mission and academic programs to potential student-athletes.