In an era where scandals seem to dominate the headlines (Dufresne, 2011; Weiberg, 2011), many intercollegiate athletic stakeholders have been left wondering what has happened to the holistic educational approach upon which the ideals of intercollegiate athletics are supposed to be founded (Benford, 2007; Lapchick, 2006). Upon review of governing body, conference, and departmental mission statements, there is strong evidence of the traditional values often inherently associated with athletic participation. However, the actions of many intercollegiate athletic leaders in recent years have led skeptics to wonder whether these purported values are anything more than rhetoric (Splitt, 2011; The Drake Group, 2011). To date, only minimal investigation of intercollegiate athletic department core values has been approached, and there are no studies that have directly examined the perceptions of value systems within Division III athletic departments. Thus, the purpose of the study was to survey administrators and coaches to determine the organizational values deemed as the highest priority when carrying out the mission of Division III athletic departments.

The era of organizational value statements began in 1994 soon after Jim Collins and Jerry Porras released their influential book Built to Last (Lencioni, 2002), which documented the presence of a core ideology in high performing organizations. Within this core ideology, scholars have emphasized that there must be consistency in the culturalization of these values at each level if an organization is going to maximize its efficiency (Abreu, Macedo, & Camarimha-Matos, 2009; Berings, Defruty, & Bouwen, 2004). In essence, employees are far more likely to be productive when they share similar beliefs towards the environment they are operating within on a daily basis (Collins & Porras, 2000; Meir, 1989). For NCAA athletic departments, this process starts with congruency among the administration (e.g., head athletic director, senior athletic directors, associate athletic directors) and coaching staffs that are in place within the organization. Thus, if the goal is to establish buy-in among department wide staff and student-athletes, it seems fundamental that the administration and coaching staffs are on board with the organizational core values that are being emphasized within the department.

The research utilized an online survey that was distributed to administrators and coaches to develop an understanding of the values that are emphasized within NCAA Division III athletic departments. Due to the exploratory nature of the research, an investigation of athletic department websites was conducted to identify the values present in mission statements. Based on this assessment, there were a set of 11 organizational values that emerged as the most common for Division III athletic departments. However, before finalizing the instrument, a panel of experts was formed to assess the validity of the value items included on the survey. Following a series of basic revisions, the instrument was approved by the panel of experts (four senior-level intercollegiate administrators, two professors, and expert in survey design) for distribution.

The survey was distributed via email to each of the NCAA institutions featured at the Division III level. The department staff directories on coinciding athletic websites were used to obtain the email addresses for the targeted administrators (senior staff [Head AD’s and Senior Athletic Directors]) and coaches at each institution. While the head athletic directors were identified as the primary contact, the remaining senior administrators were copied on the email invitation and were encouraged to help determine the individual best suited to respond to the survey. Similarly, each of the individual teams was asked to have a member of their staff fill out the survey as well. Following the first rounds of invitations, at least 25% of the institutions (and coaches) had responded to the instrument.

In order to assess reliability, a pilot study was carried out to determine the Cronbach’s Alpha (a) of the survey instrument. Based on this assessment, the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient (.964) provided evidence of reliability within the survey instrument (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Following the closing of the survey, the data will be placed into a file for analyses within SPSS 19 where descriptive statistics will be generated for each of the organizational value items. In addition to basic means and standard deviations, a one-way T-test will be conducted for each of the items to
determine the significance of the sample mean relative to the “high priority” ($\mu \geq 4$) benchmark on the scale. This benchmark was set prior to the analysis based on interactions with the panel of experts. However, to control for Type I error, only values over four will included in the analyses. Further, an ANOVA will used to examine the differences in priority level when focusing on responses provided by administrators and coaches. The Levene’s Test for Equality of Variance will be used when comparing the sample means within the related statistical procedures. An alternative “equal variances not assumed” format will be used when necessary to account for heterogeneous variances.

One of the primary areas of emphasis in value system research is the congruency of values at all levels within an organization (Abreu et al., 2009; Berings et al., 2004). Based on previous research, it is not uncommon for leaders to have a vision for the organization that they are in charge of running (Lencioni, 2002). However, if the goal is to create core values that are embraced throughout the organization, then it is essential that leaders take the time to assess the level of congruency that exists among employees at different levels within the organization. With this type of analysis, athletic directors are provided with the information necessary to enhance efficiency among employees within the athletic department. The current research will look to gain a better understanding of the value systems that exist within NCAA Division III athletic departments.