Integration of Adaptive Sports as Emerging NCAA Sports: A Critical Perspective

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This presentation will present a critical perspective regarding the status of inclusion of athletes with disabilities within college sports, particularly those competing in adaptive sports on the 40th Anniversary of Title IX. The authors will utilize a series of interlinking frameworks including the Sport Opportunity Spectrum, along with the Critical Change Factors Model as they relate to the Organizational Continuum of Workplace Diversity to help provide a snapshot of the current realities facing athletes, coaches and administrators with disabilities in college sports including adaptive sports (e.g., wheelchair basketball and tennis) and how a systems change approaches can create a new equity paradigm in sport that provides a more inclusive environment (Fay, 2011).

This presentation will also provide a brief background to the public laws and sport policy decisions over the past 40 years beginning with the passage of The Educational Reform Act of 1972 (Title IX), Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Amateur Sports Act of 1978, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Ted Stevens Amateur Sports Act of 1998, Article 30.5 of the UN Convention on Human Rights for Persons with a Disability ratified in 2007 and finally the Maryland Fitness and Sport Equity Act of 2008.

This presentation will conclude by: a) providing brief overview a “systems approach” to creating greater equity and inclusion in college sports (Fay, 1999; Mintzberg, 2003); b) outlining how individuals are often systematically excluded from sport opportunities (Wolff & Fay, 2009); and c) discussing the phenomena of the “outlier effect” through providing a select number of brief bio-sketches of former intercollegiate athletes with disabilities (DePauw & Gavron, 2005; Galdwell, 2008). Finally, the authors will outline a call for more critical research and scholarly work focused on how the NCAA can take a lead in promoting greater equity, social and economic justice, and inclusion in sport for individuals with disabilities including adaptive sports as NCAA sanctioned sports (Nixon, 2008; Coakley, 2008).