

**The Impact of Student-Athlete Community Service Partnerships on Community Agencies**

*Per G. Svensson, University of Louisville*

*Matt R. Huml, University of Louisville*

*Meg G. Hancock (Advisor), University of Louisville*

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Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is receiving increasingly more attention in the sport industry. Scholars within business literature have conceptualized CSR in several different ways since the mid 20th century (see Garriga & Melé, 2004). According to Carroll (1979, 1991), CSR consists of four domains of responsibilities for organizations: (a) Economic, (b) Legal, (c) Ethical, and (d) Philanthropic. Scholars have recently begun to examine the impact of CSR initiatives by professional sport organizations on stakeholders including fans and spectators of the NFL, the NHL, the PGA Tour, and NASCAR (e.g., Walker & Kent, 2009; Walker & Kent, 2010; Walker, Kent, & Jordan, 2011). Research on CSR initiatives in intercollegiate athletics, however, remains scarce. Brown (2012) examined types of CSR practices in intercollegiate athletics within Carroll's (1979, 1991) four domains of CSR among 266 NCAA athletic departments. The results of the study revealed athletic departments emphasized CSR initiatives focused on legal responsibilities. Environmental concerns and supporting social causes were the least emphasized by athletic administrators. In other words, intercollegiate athletic administrators generally view their social responsibility to be more focused on protecting their organization from legal ramifications rather than supporting social causes. Despite a perceived lack of emphasis for supporting social causes, Chalk (2008) found NCAA Division I athletic administrators view community service as a way to express their gratitude to the local community.

Community service is one of the initiatives supported by the NCAA for the educational and personal development of student-athletes through the NCAA Student-Athlete Affairs program, formerly known as the CHAMPS/Life Skills program (NCAA, 2008). Prior studies have explored the influence of community service programs on student-athletes (McHugo, 2005; Jarvie & Paule-Kobe, 2012) and attitudes among athletic administrators on community service programs (Brown, 2012, Chalk, 2008). Some evidence suggests athletic administrators view student-athlete community service programs as a tool to strengthen their organizational image (Chalk, 2008).

If athletic departments view community service as a tool for brand awareness, could the same be true for community agencies? Gazley, Littlepage, and Bennett (2012) found nonprofit managers report three primary benefits from student volunteers: (a) external (e.g., increased visibility), (b), internal (e.g., improved client relationships), and (c) increased volunteer capacity (e.g., students continuing to volunteer over a long period of time).. No existing studies, however, have explored the impact of student-athlete community service partnerships on community agencies. It is important to examine the attitudes and experiences of community agencies working with student volunteers for enhancing these partnerships and establishing mutually beneficial community service partnerships (Littlepage, Gazley, & Bennett, 2009).

Thus, the purpose of this qualitative study is two-fold. First, we explore why community agencies engage in community service partnerships with intercollegiate athletic departments. Second, we examine agency attitudes toward the effectiveness of involving student-athletes in service activities. The guiding research questions of this study are: (1) Why do community agencies engage in community service partnerships with intercollegiate athletic departments? (2) What are program managers' attitudes toward the effectiveness of student-athlete community service programs? The sampling frame includes local community agencies affiliated with a large, metropolitan NCAA Division I athletic department in the Midwest. Agencies were selected through purposeful criterion sampling. The sample criteria for selection of community organizations are (a) local organizations (no national affiliation); (b) currently in partnership with athletic department in study; and (c) organization has engaged with athletes or athletic teams at least two times. Formal, semi-structured interviews will be conducted until saturation is reached or up to 25 participants between December 2012 and February 2013. The researchers will also collect documents including promotional material from the participating community agencies and the athletic department.

The findings of this study will help fill a gap in existing sport management literature by providing an initial

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understanding of why community agencies engage in student-athlete community service partnerships. Furthermore, this study will provide insight into the perceived effectiveness of student-athlete community service programs by community agencies. Program recommendations will then be discussed for enhancing these programs and establishing mutually beneficial community service partnerships.