Higher education faces many challenges today, such as, budget reductions, faculty and staff furloughs, and the elimination of academic programs. According to Lumpkin (2009, p. 1), “the challenges facing higher education may mean that meeting the developmental needs of faculty during transitional stages in their careers becomes even more critical.” Thus, it is important for us to not only retain our current faculty, but provide avenues for them to be successful. Baldwin, DeZure, Shaw, and Moretto (2008) define mid-career as “the lengthy period between the end of professors’ probationary years and their preparation for retirement” (p. 48). According to Strage, Nelson, and Meyers (2008), “Nationwide, over half of higher education faculty are at mid-career” (p. 71). Since mid-career faculty comprise a large percentage of all college and university faculties, it is important to examine their professional development and mentoring needs.

One avenue which can help with faculty retention and success is a high quality mentoring and professional development program. Faculty mentoring and professional development has received much attention at the junior faculty level (e.g., Foote & Solem, 2009; Leslie, Lingard, & Whyte, 2005). However, a literature review reveals a dearth of studies on mid-career faculty mentoring and professional development. The topics written on mid-career mentoring and professional development include: programs to improve teaching (Romano, Hoesing, O'Donovan, & Weinsheimer 2004), recommendations for supporting mid-career researchers (Nottis, 2005), professional development models (Baldwin & Chang, 2006; Canale, Herdklotz, & Wild, October 23, 2013), key challenges (Baker-Fletcher, Carr, Menn, & Ramsay, 2005; Buch, Huet, Rorrer, & Roberson, 2011), and key components that influence growth and renewal (Baldwin, DeZure, Shaw, & Moretto, 2008; Strage, Nelson, & Meyers, 2008).

Baldwin and Chang (2006) developed a model for mid-career faculty development and mentoring. They propose a model that can provide a support system for faculty in the middle years of academic life. The steps in the mid-career faculty development process include (a) career reflection and assessment, (b) career planning: short and long term goals, and (c) career action/implementation). Additionally, three areas of support are proposed in the model to maintain the development process and include (a) collegial support, (b) resources, and (c) reinforcement. Faculty members at the mid-career stage “have been largely ignored in higher education policy and practice” (Baldwin & Chang, 2006, p. 28) and this group plays a key role in their universities and academic disciplines. Given the aforementioned information, a study on mid-career faculty in sport management is timely and the findings have the potential to help programs and departments that house sport management programs develop high quality faculty mentoring programs.

The purpose of the study was to determine the merit and applicability of the mid-career faculty development model proposed by Baldwin and Chang (2006). Another purpose was to elicit recommendations from associate and full professors in sport management for the development of a mid-career faculty mentoring program.

The research questions included:

1. What are sport management associate and full professors’ perspectives regarding the three key facets, (a) career reflection and assessment, (b) career planning: short and long term goals, and (c) career action/implementation, in the mid-career faculty development process?

2. What are sport management associate and full professors’ perspectives regarding the three areas of support needed, (a) collegial support, (b) resources, and (c) reinforcement, to maintain the development process?

3. What recommendations do sport management associate and full professors have for mid-career faculty mentoring programs?
A purposive sampling method was used and a total of 22 sport management faculty members from varying institutions across a large mid-western state were invited to participate in the study. Thirteen associate professor and 4 full professors responded to the request to participate in the study and agreed to participate. A total of 9 institutions were included in the sample (i.e., 3 teaching institutions, 5 teaching/research institutions, 1 research institution). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant. The interview guide consisted of nine questions with six questions focused on Baldwin and Chang's (2006) Mid-Career Faculty Development Model and three questions focused on recommendations for Mid-Career faculty mentoring programs. Prior to interviewing the participants, to establish trustworthiness and credibility, a pilot test was conducted. Two sport management faculty members from institutions outside the sample list were interviewed and asked to provide feedback on the semi-structured interview. As a result of the pilot test, the questions were slightly changed and expanded to gather fuller perspectives from the participants. Each interview was recorded with a digital voice recorder. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and shared with each participant for member checking. In addition to interviews, field notes were kept. Each participant was asked to complete a demographic information sheet. Categories were developed from an inductive analysis (Patton, 2002). Two peer debriefers were used as part of the review and confirmation process of the transcripts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The results showed positive support for the model and revealed that participants perceived reflection and assessment as important. Participants focused on short term goals and agreed with career planning, and identified collegial support, time/sabbaticals, release time, and travel funds as central resources. Lastly, the participants supported recognition as a form of reinforcement, but felt it should be individualized. The suggestions for associate professor mentoring programs indicated a formal program would be beneficial, but participants were not sure how to implement this type of program. Participants were mixed in their support of full professors serving as mentors. Further, participants mentioned full professors could serve as long as they have the skill set and desire to serve in these roles. Relative to full professor mentoring, the findings revealed mentoring for next steps in a full professor’s career (e.g., administration) was valued. The suggestions from the study can assist administrators in the development of Mid-Career mentoring and professional development programs.