Access to intercollegiate sports opportunities has increased in response to federal law and court decisions; however gender inequities in sport continue. Various sport associations share a common goal: to persuade NCAA institutions to add their sport. Yet, over the last four decades, sports such as women’s equestrian, women’s rugby, men’s wrestling and men’s gymnastics have had little or no success in persuading institutions to include these sports in their athletic offerings. For example, from its inception in 1988, women’s equestrian has only seen 25 NCAA institutions adopt programs, three of which are dropping or slated to drop current programs by next year. Women’s rugby has similar growth issues with only 11 schools have added such programs. Hence, for college sport to continue to advance equity and opportunity, there is a clear need to understand why some sports programs are being added and experiencing growth, while others sit in a fairly status quo position; or worse, are missing out on opportunities to grow.

In 2014-2015, across all NCAA institutions 140 men’s teams were added and 56 were dropped, while 179 women’s teams were added and 47 were dropped (Irick, 2015). This equates to a net gain in added programs, providing several thousand individual opportunities for athletes to compete and have access to an education through their sport. While overall more sports are being added then dropped, it has been unclear why some sports quickly get their programs added, while others struggle for years with minimal growth. Results from this study showed that a range of factors are considered and even prioritized, but for the sport associations tasked with promoting and acquiring sponsorship from new institutions, the factors and the priorities NCAA Division I Athletic Directors focus on when making a decision to add a sport are often unclear.

A review of emerging sports’ websites revealed that most of the sporting groups advocating for their sport, invoke themes such as Title IX, low cost, and regional competition opportunities; Yet, these common messages do not seem to appeal to NCAA institutions as arguments for elevating to NCAA status. From a marketing perspective it appears there is a mismatch between the buyer (NCAA institutions) and seller (sport associations). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the mismatch of marketing communications between the NCAA institutions and the sport associations.

Consumer behavior and marketing theory provide strong insight regarding buyer-seller mismatch. For example, Sheath (1976) was one of the first to articulate factors involved in buyer-seller communications and how to identify and resolve mis-matches between buyer and seller needs and wants. Utilizing this Buyer-Seller Interaction Conceptual Framework (Sheath, 1976), one is able to consider both the expectations offered by the buyer and seller and demonstrate “what” mismatch exists. In addition, Kano’s (1984) Customer Satisfaction Model is applied to this research as a way to explain “why” the mismatch exists. Kano’s (1984) has provided a four dimensional model assists in explaining Customer Requirements for new products and services. This model provides four mutually exclusive types: "one-dimensional," "must-be," "attractive," "indifferent," or "reverse" using a scale of three feelings being satisfied, indifferent, or dissatisfied. In the context of the sport adoption factors this will speak directly to what required factors does the sport fulfill that the seller is highlight rather then what extra factors makes the sport attractive which may or may not affect whether or not a sport gets added to an individual institution.

This study uses theoretically based marketing theory to provide guidance to practitioners regarding how to design and implement their marketing messages toward the adoption of more NCAA emerging sports. The exploration and clarification of this mismatch and why it exists could provide sport managers and associations with useful information in regards to promoting their sport. Institutions and athletic directors will be able to use the discussion and findings from this study to assist them when considering new sport programs for their college or university, while the NCAA may use this same data when considering new sports for emerging categories.
Research Questions
The primary guiding research questions (RQ) for this study are as follows:
RQ 1: What factors (or criteria) do NCAA Division I Athletic Directors consider key in deciding whether to add a sport to their institutions?
RQ 2: How are these factors prioritized in the process of making the decision to add a sport?

Design Overview
The research design of this qualitative, descriptive, exploratory study taking into account a variety of factors and considerations that contribute to a single decision within intercollegiate athletics. Participants were recruited from the database of 350 NCAA Division I Athletic Directors and selected based on the premise that their institution added a sport during the 3 years of this study (2009-2012) or the participant had to be either planning or considering adding one or more sports to their institution. In an attempt to provide data that could be cross-tabulated across all school sizes and sport categories a matrix was used to place participants into small, medium, and large schools as well as by their sport type (team or individual), category (championships or emerging) and by gender.

Fifteen athletic administrators were interviewed using an elite, semi-structured interview protocol to collect pertinent data, focusing on 25 factors. In several cases multiple sports were being added simultaneously at individual institutions, which accounted for data to be collected on 23 sport programs. Transcripts were subsequently analyzed in accordance with Patton’s (1990) strategies and then imported into the ATLAST™ software program to assist with organizing data for analysis. This was a cyclical process and data was revisited as new participants were interviewed.

Results and Discussion
The priorities of the athletic directors and the institutions become evident from the quantity of participants’ responses surrounding an individual factor, associated factors, and a direct interview prompt asking directors to list the three priority factors included in their decision to add a sport to their institution. In reducing the data, four themes emerged as priorities, supporting the justification to add a sport: association membership, university visibility, sport popularity and access and opportunity. It also became apparent that regardless of the priority that each institution had for adding a sport, there was a level of interconnectedness among the other priority factors and results pointed to likely connections between institution size and those factors. For example, smaller institutions mentioned enrollment management as being key in the decision to add a sport, while larger institutions noted increased exposure and media attention that a sport participating in post-season play could bring to the institution.

Implications
Based on results from this study a mismatch among sellers (sport associations) and the buyers (NCAA institutions) is evident. In general, this study will increase the current body of knowledge, as well as, provide practical guidance for sport associations a chance grow their sport. More specifically sport association sellers can better tailor their marketing message to fit the priorities of the institutional buyers.