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Impact Sports has on Educational Institutions

When you hear Notre Dame University, most think about the prestigious football that once ruled the football field. Now what about Oregon University? Track and field giants and their direct connection with Nike. Now what about Massachusetts Institute of Technology? Academically prestigious. You see what I am trying to hint at. We as Americans have viewed these higher education institutions in terms of their athletic affiliation and not for what they are supposed to do, bring a higher level of thought and education. But we see that the school's image is one that isn't about education and what majors they offer, but mainly an image that is based off the on field, court, ice, pool, etc. success.

Depending on the school, these images may or may not have been what they were looking to achieve. This is more of how impactful sports can be on schools, which is greater than what we thought sports actually has. School authorities and presidents are aware of this power that sports has on the public, and depending on what the school wants to achieve, sports is the way to get those goals accomplished. While many, including myself, believed that schools use sports, especially men's basketball and football, to help generate money and that's about it. But that is not the case. Yes, money is defiantly earned from these major sports and schools should capitalize on that opportunity, but there are other reasons to building sports programs.

Let's look at Travis Feezell's *The Uses of Intercollegiate Sports*, in which he looks at Adrian College. Where Adrian is a small Division 3 college located in Michigan, and was announcing the addition of six more athletic programs in 2008. Here the reason for adding in

these sports was not that of increasing revenue but rather a purpose of athletics is to attract students who desire to continue competing, thus enabling the institution to more readily reach enrollment targets (Feezell 68). Small schools have found ways to increase revenue in a way that isn't directly related to sports sales, but rather in getting new students to attend their school to do what they are meant to do, get an education. Continuing to look at Adrian, where the college has experienced a 50 percent increase in enrollment, three thousand additional applicants, 21 percent greater selectivity, and a \$20 million increase in its budget (68). The addition of sports is the reason for these increases and again showing the impact sports has on small schools.

I see this myself at Trine University, where I have attended now for two years. Now Trine is adding in a new basketball arena, building an ice hockey arena, as well as a men and women's hockey team. Many people on campus believe that the reason behind this growth and focus on the athletics aspect of the university is to gain money. That would be true, but it's more about increasing school spirit, widening the Trine brand name, and is bringing in more students to the school. Trine is doing what Adrian did back in 2008. As Trine has shown exponential growth this past decade, as shown here: Trine welcomed 630 new students when classes began Aug. 26 2014. That record-setting class contributed to Trine's record overall enrollment of 3,600 students, compared to 2,400 last year (Trine 1).

Many will say even though sports are a great way to get students into the doors, to try and get a higher education. While I have been talking about smaller schools, what about those at higher level, or larger schools like Notre Dame? Here is where it does get a little more difficult. Many of these athletes at the Division 1 level are seeking a way to get into their professional association for their sport. That is not to down-size the effect their education has on these student-athletes. Athletes have this full time job or commitment to their job as they are on a full-

ride scholarship to play. These athletes do put in a 40-hour week dedicated to their sport and still get an education. A study conducted by NCAA and an article by USA Today indicates this idea. Division I baseball players said they spent 40 hours on their sport, 32 on academics; in men's basketball, it was 36.8 hours on their sport vs. 33.9 hours on academics (Weiberg 1). Obviously, students are putting in time in their respective sport, but making possible professionals and keeping rich alumni in contact is a benefactor of sports.

Sports constitute a ready means for alumni, in particular, to continue a relationship with the institution, an association that is important in motivating financial contributions (Feezell 68). So building these athletes help the school gain some money that can help them to renovate academic buildings, add in more student services, and also give students more opportunities to achieve academically. Isn't that what universities are striving for? A university's goal is to provide students with an education and a give them opportunities to network and to get into their career field. Interscholastic athletic participation may provide a structure within which interactions with other students are frequent and repeated. Such a framework makes it possible to build supportive and cooperative networks with peers and with adults who work with sports teams (Langbein and Bess 438). Sports is all about building relationships and possibly allowing them to network as they become adults.

Schools are allowing students to build those relationships while also giving them an education. The impact of sports goes further than getting more dollars into the school's bank account, it's the means of creating more opportunities for these students to graduate and become successful. Sports allows schools to earn money, expand their brand, increase attendance and acquire important alumni. All of these lead to a better overall atmosphere for the students and for the community supporting the school.

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