THE ROLE OF THE FACULTY ATHLETICS REPRESENTATIVE AT NCAA DIVISION I FBS INSTITUTIONS

A doctoral thesis presented
by

Patrick Leary

to
The School of Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

in the field of
Education

College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
July 2014
Abstract

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) requires all member institutions to appoint a faculty athletics representative (FAR) to guard academic integrity and ensure institutional control, yet despite the appointment of the FAR it is difficult to define the role of the FAR in decisions regarding both academics and athletics at the institutions where they work. The purpose of this study was to investigate the current role of the FAR in the governance of athletics at NCAA Division I Football Bow Subdivision (FBS) member institutions where intercollegiate athletics are an integral part of campus life. Five current FARs at Division I FBS institutions participated in this study. The researcher used a phenomenological analysis to examine their experiences. The participants revealed it takes a significant amount of time to fully comprehend the role and responsibilities of the FAR. The participants perceived the ambiguous nature of the FAR position as a primary factor in the long adjustment period. In addition, the demands of serving as full-time faculty members prevented the participants from dedicated as much time as they would like to their FAR responsibilities. Although the participants enjoyed developing relationships with student-athletes, most of participants found it frustrating they were not consulted on athletics-related decisions that could impact the academic integrity and institutional control of the athletics program. The findings are relevant for higher education administrators who appoint FARs, as they are in a position to remove some of the institutional barriers that prevent FARs from being effective in the role. Additional research is needed to investigate FAR involvement in the student-athlete admissions process as a means of understanding how they can strengthen their oversight of academic integrity.

Keywords: faculty athletics representative, intercollegiate athletics, governance, institutional control, academic integrity
Acknowledgements

I have learned so much through this journey and cannot express how grateful I am to the amazing people who have helped and supported me along the way. I want to especially thank and acknowledge my wife Lauren, the love of my life. You are an amazing person and I cannot thank you enough for your love, support, and patience. Without your love and understanding, I could not have completed this journey. I appreciate you more than words can ever express. Thank you for taking such good care of our family. You are our rock.

I want to thank my son Benjamin for inspiring me to complete this degree as quickly as possible. You motivate me to be the best person I can possibly be and every moment I get to spend with you is precious. Watching you grow through this process has been the most rewarding experience of my life. I also want to thank my parents, John and Sheila. Thank you for being amazing parents and role models. I thank you for teaching me the value of hard work and the importance of family. I will be forever grateful to you.

I am grateful to my colleagues at Johnson & Wales who have encouraged me along the way. I am especially thankful to my friend, mentor, and external reader, Dr. Karen Silva. Thank you for understanding the challenges of trying to complete a doctorate while working full-time and raising a newborn son. You were a wonderful department chair but an even better friend. Thank you for everything.

Dr. Kimberly Nolan, thank you for being such a wonderful advisor. I am forever indebted for all of your guidance and support. You always had a way of making me stay positive and keeping me on track. I could not have asked for a better experience. I am also extremely thankful to Dr. Joseph McNabb. Your guidance and expert feedback helped me more than you
know. I was very lucky to have such an amazing committee and I will be forever grateful to the both of you.

Finally, I want to thank my extended family who helped take care of those who I love most throughout this process. Lou and Geri DeBartelo, thank you for everything. Brian Leary, thanks for being my best friend. Huxley, thank you for being the most loyal and loving dog anyone could ask for. You love was always felt during those long nights of reading and writing. Thank you for reminding me I am never alone.
# Table of Contents

**Chapter One: The Research Problem**

- Statement of the Problem .......................................................... 9
- Research Questions and Goals ......................................................... 10
- Summary and Organization of the Study ............................................. 11
- Role Theory .................................................................................. 11
- Origins and Evolution ................................................................. 13

**Chapter Two: Literature Review**

- Current State of Faculty Involvement in Athletics Governance ............... 22
- The Importance of the Role of the FAR ............................................ 25
- Barriers Faced by FARs ................................................................. 30
- Summary of Literature Review ......................................................... 35

**Chapter Three: Research Design**

- Research Questions ....................................................................... 38
- Methodology .................................................................................. 39
- Site and Participants ...................................................................... 40
- Recruitment and Access ............................................................... 41
- Data Collection .............................................................................. 42
- Data Analysis ................................................................................ 43
- Limitations .................................................................................... 45
- Validity and Credibility .................................................................. 45
- Protection of Human Subjects .......................................................... 46
- Conclusion ................................................................................... 47
### Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis

- **Role of the FAR** ................................................................. 49
  - Adjusting to the role of FAR ............................................. 50
  - Background experience ................................................. 52
  - Shadow program .......................................................... 53
- **FAR Responsibilities** ....................................................... 55
  - Impact on faculty responsibilities .................................... 55
  - Responsibilities of FARs vary across institutions ............... 57
  - Responsibility to student-athletes ................................... 60
- **Relationships** ................................................................ 62
  - Relationship with the Chief Executive Officer ................. 62
  - Strained relations between athletics and academics ........... 64
  - Cultivating new relationships ......................................... 66
- **Conclusion** ..................................................................... 70

### Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications

- **The Role of the FAR** .......................................................... 74
- **Responsibilities** ............................................................... 79
- **Relationships** .................................................................. 82
- **Goals and Implications** ..................................................... 85
- **Implications for Practice** .................................................. 86
- **Implications for Research** .................................................. 89

### References ............................................................................ 95

### Appendix A: Recruitment letter .......................................... 99
Appendix B: Consent to participate .......................................................... 100
Appendix C: IRB approval ................................................................. 102
Appendix D: Interview protocol ....................................................... 103
Chapter One: The Research Problem

The national media exposure and substantial revenues created by successful athletic programs have led to an arms race amongst institutions who invest millions of dollars hiring celebrity coaches and building state-of-the-art athletics facilities with the hope of recruiting the best athletes (Martin & Christy, 2010). This commercialization of intercollegiate athletics at Division I-A National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) member institutions could place the academic integrity of these institutions at risk.

According to the Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) Handbook (2012), a university or college president appoints a FAR to ensure academic integrity and institutional control of the athletics program. Yet, research suggests the FAR is often shut out from the decision-making processes of athletics programs by athletic directors and coaches (Gerdy, 2002). The emphasis Division I colleges and universities place on producing winning athletic programs may compromise the academic integrity of the institution because, while the NCAA establishes minimum eligibility requirements for student-athletes, these requirements can be significantly lower than academic admissions standards for non-athletes at Division I institutions. A study by Fried (2007) suggests SAT scores for male athletes in high-profile sports were, on average, 140 to 165 points lower for non-athletes at elite colleges and universities across the United States. Faculty members at Division I institutions do not believe lowering academic admissions standards for talented athletes should be tolerated (Lawrence, Ott, & Hendricks, 2009). The role of the FAR at Division I institutions needs to be studied to determine how FARs can become involved in the student-athlete admissions process at their respective institutions as a means of protecting academic integrity and reversing the impact of commercialization. As the gatekeepers of academic integrity at institutions of higher education, it is important to identify ways for faculty members to become more involved in matters of athletic governance and academic
oversight.

Minimal research attention has been directed towards the role of the FAR in athletic governance and decisions involving athletics. Previous studies have focused on the role faculty senates play in athletic governance; however, the specific role of the faculty athletics representative in decisions involving athletics is unexplored (James, 2004). Qualitative inquiry provides the opportunity for current FARs to articulate their present role in the governance process and offer recommendations for enhancing academic oversight.

By examining the underrepresentation of FARs in decisions involving athletics using qualitative inquiry, practitioners can better understand the barriers FARs may encounter when attempting to become involved in matters pertaining to athletics. With this understanding, administrators can better assist FARs by equipping them with the resources they need to fulfill their designated duties.

Statement of the Problem

Intercollegiate athletics programs often serve as the “front porch” of institutions of higher education; however, faculty, who are the cornerstone of life in higher education, play an undefined, and in many cases, insignificant role in the governance of athletics programs (Gerdy, 2002). Nearly one-third of the 340 faculty athletics representatives at Division I-A institutions are not consulted on major athletics decisions (Wolverton, 2010). Despite the fact the NCAA mandates all member institutions designate a FAR to serve as the faculty voice in matters pertaining to athletics, nearly 40% of Division I-A FARs do not have a job description. Based on personal conversations the researcher has had with faculty members at Division I-A institutions, many of them admit they are unwilling to serve as the FAR because the specific duties of the role are not clearly outlined. Furthermore, they are fearful of both the time
commitment and the potential of negative perceptions emanating from their peers should they assume the role of the FAR.

A study to determine the role the FAR plays in athletic governance is important for several reasons. First, understanding the role the FAR plays in athletic governance helps determine the effectiveness of the position. According to the FAR Handbook (2012), the FAR is expected to play an important role in local institutional control of athletics programs in addition to having a national voice in NCAA legislation. Second, there is a fundamental concern amongst faculty that athletics devalues the core academic mission, is excessively commercialized, and invites unethical and scandalous behavior (Lawrence et al., 2009). Knowledge of the FAR’s involvement in athletics governance provides insight into how these concerns are addressed at Division I-A member institutions. Third, this study presents the opportunity for FARs to provide valuable feedback regarding a best-practice model for the role of a FAR at Division I-A institutions. Fourth, an examination of the role of the FAR provides academic administrators with insight regarding best-practices in the appointment or election process of the FAR.

Research Questions and Goals

The primary questions that guided this research were: (1) What does it mean to serve in the role as FAR at NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) institutions? (2) How do FARs feel their experience in this role allows them to ensure academic integrity and institutional control of athletics? (3) Do FARs perceive their role to be ambiguous? (4) How do FARs feel university leadership can empower them to play a greater role in the governance of athletics?

The practical goal of this research was to document the current state of FARs at institutions where athletics play a prominent role in campus life—Division I FBS institutions. Understanding the role the FAR plays in athletic governance helps determine the effectiveness of
the position. According to the *FAR Handbook* (2012), the FAR is expected to play an important role in local institutional control of athletics programs in addition to having a national voice in NCAA legislation. The researcher analyzed the involvement of FARs in institutional decision-making involving athletics. Knowledge of the FARs involvement in athletics governance provides insight into how faculty concerns are addressed at Division I FBS institutions.

**Summary and Organization of the Study**

This thesis is organized according to the steps taken to investigate the role of FARs at Division I FBS institutions. Chapter one concludes with a discussion of role theory as the theoretical framework guiding this study. Chapter two contains a review of the literature related to faculty governance of intercollegiate athletics, including the current state of the research and deficiencies in the literature. Chapter three includes a description of the research methodology used to explore the problem, as well as information about the participants, data collection and analysis methods, and measures used to ensure validity and trustworthiness of the findings. In addition, an explanation of the steps taken to ensure the protection of the participants is also included in Chapter three. Chapter four includes a detailed analysis of the data, which was obtained through a series of personal interviews with the participants. Chapter five contains a discussion of the findings as situated within the extant literature and the tenets of role theory. Finally, Chapter five concludes with implications for practice that are based on the research findings, as well as recommendations for future research on the topic.

**Role Theory**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current role of the FAR in the governance of athletics at NCAA Division I FBS member institutions where intercollegiate athletics are an integral part of campus life. Although the NCAA mandates all member institutions designate a FAR, nearly 40% of current FARs are not provided with a job description
by their respective institutions (Wolverton, 2010). Furthermore, nearly one-third of FARs are not consulted on athletics-related decisions, despite the fact FARs are appointed for the purpose of protecting academic integrity and ensuring institutional control of athletics. Ambiguity and misinterpretation of roles are prime sources of problems in the internal organization of colleges and universities (Bess & Dee, 2008). Both role conflict and role ambiguity are directly linked to job dissatisfaction and can occur when job responsibilities are not clearly articulated to the role recipient (Abramis, 1994). Furthermore, dysfunctional individual and organizational consequences result from the existence of role conflict and role ambiguity in complex organizations (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). As a result, role theory was the ideal theoretical framework for this investigation due to its ability to inform the higher education field about the role conflict and role ambiguity many FARs at Division I FBS institutions experience.

Roles are organizationally defined positions that are connected with one another in a seemingly systematic and rational way, particularly in larger organizations that operate bureaucratically, such as a traditional higher education institution. The implementation of role theory in this investigation provided an opportunity to examine how organizational factors, such as a lack of a formal job description, contribute to role conflict and role ambiguity within a higher education setting. The tenets of role theory provided a perfect lens to examine how the role responsibilities of the FAR are communicated and interpreted at institutions where athletics are a prominent part of campus life. The literature suggests FARs have minimal impact in matters relating to athletic governance and the student-athlete admissions process (Gerdy, 2002). The application of role theory to the previously stated problem of practice illuminates how the role responsibilities of the FAR are connected to their limited involvement in athletic governance and athletics-related decisions. Furthermore, examining the dimensions of roles within higher
education institutions and exploring their effects on faculty members who serve in the role of FAR led to a more sophisticated understanding of the effectiveness of the position.

**Origins and Evolution**

Role theory is a perspective rooted in sociology and social psychology that examines the dimensions of roles by exploring their effects on organizational members and on the organization as a whole (Bess & Dee, 2008). Roles consist of a set of rules or norms that function as plans or blueprints to guide behavior. The literature on role theory has grown substantially in recent years. Robert Merton and Talcott Parsons made pioneering contributions to the theory in the period after World War I, followed in 1958 by the landmark study of Gross, Mason, and McEachern who attempted to develop a set of role concepts that were usable in a number of social sciences. The seminal works of Biddle and Thomas (1966), and the study of organizational role stress by Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, and Snoek (1964) dramatically opened up the field. The first empirically based and extensively adopted scales to measure role stress were developed by Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman in 1970. Additionally, Kemery, Bedeian, Mossholder, and Touliatos (1985) were among the first to look intensively at the outcomes of role stress in organizations.

According to role theory, there are two general categories for defining roles (Welbourne, Johnson, & Erez, 1998). The first approach to role theory refers to a functional position in a network of interlocking responsibilities. The functional conception sees roles in terms of the requirements of the organization for certain outcomes that serve as inputs to other roles. The focus is on organizational roles in general without being specific about behaviors associated with them (Bess & Dee, 2008). For example, the role of the FAR is to ensure the academic integrity and institutional control of the athletics program. A second approach in role theory is to describe
roles in terms of behaviors expected, rather than the functional effects of the roles. Of concern in this approach are interactions between the organization and the individual, as the organization places demands and expectations on its members (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Roles in the behavioral sense are formal positions that are defined in terms of expected rights and duties. For instance, what behaviors does the job description for a FAR require? How does this set of responsibilities fit into the network of other roles in the organizational structure of the institution?

Kahn et al. (1964) developed a conceptual model to explain how roles are developed, transmitted, received, and responded to in an organization. The relationships among the variables within the original model, which was later elaborated on by Katz and Kahn (1978) and again by Bess and Dee (2008), lean heavily on role episode analysis. Role episodes display role relationships within organizations and reveal sources of differences in role expectations and related behaviors. The four factors included in the most contemporary model, as presented by Bess and Dee (2008) include: role senders, sent expectations, the received role, and the response of the focal person. The role episode model is useful in diagnosing organizational problems.
**Figure 1. Role Episode Model**

FARs are responsible for contributing to the local control of athletics; however, many FARs are not involved in athletics-related decisions (Wolverton, 2010). According to the FAR Handbook (2012), a FAR is either appointed by the chief executive officer or elected by the faculty. The responsibility of providing a FAR with a formal job description lies with the chief executive officer of each NCAA member institution. Furthermore, chief executive officers should ensure FARs are consulted in major decisions involving athletics. By using the role episode model to break down the modes by which roles are created and transmitted within an institutional setting, one can identify the potential sources of miscommunication.

Role senders are people in positions of authority who have the power and responsibility
to define the official role, assign and make the role responsibilities public, and communicate the practical meaning of the role to the focal person (Bess & Dee, 2008). For example, the chief executive officer should provide a written job description to the faculty member who is appointed as the FAR. A clearly articulated job description, highlighting the responsibilities of the FAR as established by the NCAA, can reduce role conflict for the FAR. The concept of sent expectations has two components: the role sender’s behavior expectations for the focal person, and the consequences that the role sender will impose for ensuing actions by the focal person (Bess & Dee, 2008). What a FAR is expected to do and what happens if he or she does or does not are both part of the sent expectations. For instance, a chief executive may inform a FAR that he needs to monitor the academic attainment of student-athletes and ensure all student-athletes maintain a grade point average above a 2.50 throughout the academic year. The chief executive officer can communicate the successful completion of this task will result in a $5,000 increase in funding for professional development.

While the sent role is the organization’s communication to the individual, the received role is the focal person’s perceptions and cognitions of what was sent (Katz & Kahn, 1978). The ways roles are received depend on three intervening variables: organizational factors, characteristics of focal persons, and interpersonal relationships within the organization. Organizational factors such as size, position within the organization, and type of organization determine how roles are communicated and understood (Kahn et al., 1964). Role senders consider the personal attributes of the people to whom they send roles and modify the sent role based on their understanding of the characteristics of the focal person (Katz & Kahn, 1978). For example, prior to appointing a faculty member to the role of FAR, a chief executive officer may consider the faculty member’s personal awareness of the primary mission of intercollegiate
athletics. Interpersonal relations that develop between the sender and receiver represent a third set of variables that modify the sent role. The hope is that organization members will receive and understand the role sent and perform it according to specification. However, role behavior does not always conform to role expectations. The psychological and behavioral state of the focal person factors into their response to the sent role. For instance, a newly employed organizational member may not have a firm sense of their role responsibilities and may respond differently than an experienced colleague who performs the same role.

Role conflict and role ambiguity are prime sources of job dissatisfaction and communication problems in higher education institutions, which, in turn, lead to performances that fail to meet personal and organizational expectations (Thompson, McNamara, & Hoyle, 1997). Role conflict is a state of cognition or affect of a role incumbent characterized by incongruity or incompatibility of expected behaviors communicated by the incumbent’s role senders (Bess & Dee, 2008). Typically, these incongruities can be traced to two sources: inadequate time and logical or ethical incompatibilities. Rizzo et al. (1970) conceptualized four different kinds of role conflict: person-role conflict, intersender conflict, intrasender conflict, and inter-role conflict. Person-role conflict is the extent to which role expectations received from role senders are perceived to be inconsistent with role expectations generated internally by the focal person’s own values. Intersender conflict is the extent to which role expectations sent by at least two role senders seem to demand behavior that is contradictory. Intrasender conflict is the extent to which a focal person perceives two or more sent role expectations from one role sender that are impossible to fulfill simultaneously. Inter-role conflict is the extent to which the various role expectations communicated to the role incumbent appear to exceed the available time and resources to meet the role expectations.
The four types of role conflict presented by Rizzo et al. (1970) suggest themes that the investigator will incorporate into the analysis of data. For example, what factors contribute to FARs experiencing role conflict at their respective institutions? Does the fact that only 44% of FARs receive release time from teaching to focus on FAR duties contribute to inter-role conflict? While the NCAA posits the role expectations of the FAR should be universally applied across all NCAA member institutions, does the fact that nearly 40% of FARs are not provided with a job description by their chief executive officer contribute to intersender conflict?

A key insight of role theory is that role ambiguity can occur when an individual is uncertain about expected role performance. Role ambiguity has a detrimental effect on job satisfaction and, to a lesser extent, a negative effect on job performance (Abramis, 1994). The notion of role ambiguity is ubiquitous at higher education institutions throughout the country where many FARs are appointed by university leadership, yet are not provided with formal job descriptions. Many role theorists see role theory as one of the most compelling theories bridging individual behavior and social structure. Van de Ven (2007) suggests a good theory simplifies and explains a complex real-world phenomenon. As Division I athletics programs continue to value athletic success over the institutional mission, the undefined role of the FAR at Division I institutions is problematic in nature. FARs should be empowered by the president to ensure the academic integrity and institutional control of the athletics program; however, many FARs feel powerless because their roles are often ambiguous and undefined (Wolverton, 2010).
Figure 2. Sources of Perceptual and Objective Role Ambiguity.

Role theory was selected as a theoretical framework because it assumes individuals will experience role ambiguity within their organization unless their role is clearly established. This study will use role theory as a lens to investigate FARs. The NCAA mandates all member institutions must designate a FAR, yet the roles and responsibilities of the FAR vary from institution to institution. Key stakeholders in the governance of intercollegiate athletics at the local level include the chief executive officer, athletic director, head coaches, and, presumably, the FAR. However, FARs are often excluded from institutional decision-making involving athletics, thus making their role expectation of ensuring the institutional control of athletics difficult. Bess & Dee’s (2008) role episode model was applied as a lens for examining how the role of the FAR is defined and interpreted by FARs at Division I FBS institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sent Role</th>
<th>Received Role</th>
<th>Understood</th>
<th>Not Understood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear</td>
<td></td>
<td>No Ambiguity</td>
<td>Perceptual Role Ambiguity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garbled or Contradictory</td>
<td>False Perceived Clarity</td>
<td>Objective Role Ambiguity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Two: Literature Review

The NCAA requires all member institutions to appoint a FAR to guard academic integrity and ensure institutional control. Yet, despite the appointment of the FAR, it is difficult to define the role of the FAR in decisions regarding both academics and athletics at the institutions where they are employed. The position of FAR is especially vital at NCAA Division I member institutions where the commercialization of intercollegiate athletics can threaten academic values (Earl, 2004). Many Division I-A athletic departments operate as autonomous auxiliary units and athletic department employees are frequently provided with the authority to make decisions that reflect the best interests of the athletic department and not the academic values of the institution. By virtue of increased media coverage and sports programming in recent years, intercollegiate athletic teams, including their student-athletes and coaches, are viewed as extensions of the university brand. As a result, academic leaders should ensure the academic integrity of the institution is protected by empowering FARs to have a stronger voice in athletic governance and decisions pertaining to athletic matters.

Faculty voices and perspectives in the administration and oversight of intercollegiate athletics programs have been recognized by the NCAA as legitimate and necessary (Faculty Athletics Representatives Association [FARA], 2012). However, nearly one-third of Division I-A FARs are not consulted on major decisions pertaining to athletics (Wolverton, 2010). FARs can only be as effective as institutional leadership allows them to be. The primary reason the NCAA decreed the appointment of a FAR at each member institution was to ensure faculty protection of academic integrity, yet FARs cannot be effective in their role if they are not included in the athletics governance process. The purpose of this literature review is to examine current issues that contribute to the perceived disconnect between athletics and academics at Division I-A institutions and suggest increased FAR involvement in athletic governance as the
key to building a bridge between athletics and the academic mission of the institution. A thorough review of the literature reveals the historical dichotomy between academics and athletics was intensified by the rampant commercialism of intercollegiate sport beginning in the 1980s. Although many scholarly conversations center on reforming intercollegiate athletics to ensure the institutional mission and academic values take precedence, the large financial payouts stemming from television contracts and conference affiliations make it difficult for academic leaders to ignore the benefits of “big-time” athletics.

The following literature review will analyze published sources that illustrate the importance of faculty involvement in athletic governance as a means of protecting the academic integrity of institutions competing in Division I-A athletics. The literature review will investigate sources that identify a need for accountability and reform within today’s Division I athletic departments. Issues to be discussed include the current state of faculty governance of athletics at Division I FBS institutions, the importance of the role of the FAR, and existing barriers that prevent FARs from fulfilling their role of ensuring student-athlete welfare and the academic integrity and institutional control of athletics. An unbiased and comprehensive review of a number of primary and secondary sources inform the reader of the issues that contribute to the current disconnect between the commercialized enterprise of college athletics and the academic mission of the institution. The literature review includes perspectives from key stakeholders including FARs, athletic administrators, university presidents, and faculty members. Following a review of the literature, the reader will understand the need for additional research to further explore the obstacles that may prevent today’s FARs from playing a greater role in the athletics governance process.
Current State of Faculty Involvement in Athletics Governance

The topic of intercollegiate athletics can be a contentious one when discussed in higher education circles. Faculty views on athletics are certainly not homogeneous; while some faculty members see the benefits to intercollegiate athletic programs, many others perceive athletics as having an overall negative effect on their institution. A recent study by Lawrence (2009) of faculty members teaching at Division I-A institutions revealed faculty members generally feel disconnected from athletics. The same study suggests a majority of faculty members perceive decisions pertaining to athletics are driven by the priorities of the entertainment industry rather than the university’s academic mission. Variations in faculty opinions can be attributed to institutional and individual differences. A study by Cockley and Roswal (1994) suggests faculty members working at Division I institutions are significantly less satisfied with their respective athletic departments than the faculty working at Division II and Division III institutions. Division I institutions tend to invest more heavily in their athletic programs than Division II and III institutions. Research suggests the level of priority an institution places on athletic programs can impact the perceptions faculty members have regarding athletics. Lawrence, Ott, and Hendricks (2009) identify gender, length of service time, field of study, and contact level with athletes as additional factors that may influence a faculty member’s perception of intercollegiate athletics.

Faculty perceptions of intercollegiate athletics have also been influenced by a supposed double standard in the hiring process of faculty members versus athletic administrators and coaches. Thelin (2008) contends coaches and athletic administrators are hired in a prompt, matter-of-fact fashion; whereas, faculty members endure a rigorous hiring process. Faculty members tend to form a negative perception of athletics because they feel individuals employed
by athletics are held to a separate set of standards and must adhere to a different set of rules. An athletic department might not think twice about hiring a winning football coach who has committed a crime; however, a university would certainly think twice about hiring a faculty member who has committed a similar crime. In addition, faculty can form a negative perception of athletics because they may feel they are held up to a different standard when engaging students and representing the institution. According to Atwell (1991), “We tolerate behavior on the field and on the court by coaches that we would not tolerate in other college or university staff members, let alone members of the faculty” (p. 12).

Good people who work on campuses with values are constantly having their character, core values, and ethics challenged by morally corrupt academic practices that drive the commercialized college sport winning and money train (Ridpath, 2008). Faculty members who have had the courage to blow the whistle on academic fraud and misconduct within athletic departments have frequently paid a heavy price for their attempts to protect and preserve their institution’s integrity. After exposing a massive cheating scam at the University of Tennessee, an English professor endured constant harassment by administrators, faculty, students, boosters, and coaches and ultimately left the university (Benford, 2007).

Research also suggests some faculty members at Division I-A institutions do recognize the positive contributions of athletics programs, perceiving they provide entertainment for students, promote alumni support, and develop positive personal characteristics in student-athletes (Engstrand, 1995). Faculty care about the welfare of student-athletes and many believe these athletes are victims used by the university for commercial gain (Kuga, 1996). Faculty members who have a negative perception of athletics may be less likely to become involved in the athletics governance process. The research presents an interesting paradox. Faculty care
about the welfare of student-athletes, yet their negative perception of athletics prevents them from becoming involved in the governance process where they may have the influence to establish policies that prevent the commercial abuse of student-athletes. Increased faculty engagement with student-athletes may create a more positive outlook towards athletics and a willingness to become proactively involved in athletics governance.

Historically, faculty involvement in the governance of intercollegiate athletics has been minimal. Kuga (1996) reports most faculty refrain from getting involved in the governance of athletics due to the time commitment. Those who do get involved in faculty governance quickly become bothered by the commercialized nature of athletics (Earl, 2004). As suggested by Bok (2009), faculty members have the greatest stake in preserving proper academic standards and principles since these values protect the integrity of their work. In 2009, faculty members at the University of Oregon were outraged and embarrassed by the negative exposure the university received because of violations committed by members of the athletic community. In response to the faculty outcry, Oregon President, Richard Lariviere, demanded more accountability from the athletics department (Kelderman, 2010). While most institutions have some type of faculty involvement in reviewing athletics department policies, they often have little authority over or input into athletics policy making (Gerdy, 1992). Interestingly, a study by Solow (1998) found that faculty at private institutions perceived they had stronger governance over athletics than faculty at public schools.

The academic world of the university takes the role of providing students with intellectual and moral leadership very seriously (Martin & Christy, 2010). Research suggests there is a large constituency of faculty members at Division I-A institutions across the country who feel the commercialization of intercollegiate athletics, coupled with the lack of oversight of
athletics departments, contribute to a decay in the university’s academic value system. Lumpkin (2008) suggests athletic directors are businesspeople who operate profit-maximizing, commercial businesses under the auspices of educational institutions. Many faculty members believe they should be part of the internal solution to bridge the gap between academics and athletics. Ott (2011) contends faculty members should be the most important stakeholder group in athletics governance based on their engagement with student-athletes in the classroom as well as their collective governance oversight of academic matters. One of the unique features of higher education is the notion of shared governance, yet when it comes to decisions involving high profile athletics this practice lacks adherence (Martin & Christy, 2010). Although the NCAA requires the appointment of a FAR at each Division I member institution, the FAR does not carry much weight or have a strong voice in the governance process (Newman, Miller, & Bartee, 2000). The fight to bring academic integrity back to intercollegiate athletics should be led by the faculty. To that end, chief executive officers should work with both the FAR and faculty body at their respective institutions to determine how FARs can have a stronger voice in athletics governance.

**The Importance of the Role of the FAR**

Every NCAA member institution is required to appoint a FAR. However, minimal research attention has been directed towards the role of the FAR in athletic governance and decisions pertaining to athletics. Previous studies have focused on the role faculty senates play in athletic governance; however, the specific role of the faculty athletics representative in decisions involving athletics is unexplored (James, 2004). According to the *FAR Handbook* (2012), the primary role of the FAR is to ensure the academic institution establishes and maintains the appropriate balance between academics and intercollegiate athletics. Individuals who may hold the position of FAR must be a member of the institution’s faculty or an
administrator who holds faculty rank. As a means of preventing a conflict of interest, the FAR may not hold an administrative or coaching position within the athletics department. The NCAA states the FAR can either be appointed by the institution’s chief executive officer or elected by the faculty. Research suggests less than half of Division I-A FARs were appointed with approval of a campus faculty-governance body and instead were simply put in place by presidents or chancellors (Wolverton, 2010). As a means of establishing consistency and accountability in the appointment of the FAR at all NCAA member institutions, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) (2002) recommends establishing an election process for the appointment of the FAR. The Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA) also supports the notion for more transparency in the appointment process of the FAR to ensure they do not have special interests (Lawrence et al., 2009).

An issue of concern in higher education is the unclear role the FAR plays in athletics governance. At many institutions, FARs are not provided with a job description or formal job training. According to Wolverton (2010), forty percent of Division I-A FARs do not have a formal job description. FARs can only be as effective as their institution allows them to be. In order for FARs to perform their role successfully as set forth by the NCAA, academic administrators should clearly outline the responsibilities of the FARs and empower them to have a voice in athletics governance. Gerdy (1992) argues the faculty voice is often not recognized as a credible source by athletic department representatives because they believe faculty have little grasp of the realities of big-time college athletics. Nearly one-third of Division I-A FARs is not consulted on decisions involving athletics, mainly due to their perceived lack of credibility when it comes to athletics (Wolverton, 2010). It should be the responsibility of the president to place primacy on the academic mission of the institution and assist FARs in establishing credibility
within the athletics governance process by clearly defining the role and responsibilities of the FAR.

As guardians of academic integrity, faculty members have an obligation to ensure academic primacy in their respective institution’s athletic programs (Kuga, 1996; Weistart, Kliever, Mason, & Bergmann, 1990). In order to encourage faculty to participate in athletics governance, they need to believe their efforts will make a difference. Lederman (2005) contends the faculty voice in athletics governance is constantly written off because their ideas are too reform-minded and they do not consider the commercialized nature of the contemporary athletics program at a Division I-A institution. For the FAR to fulfill his or her responsibility of establishing a balance between academics and intercollegiate athletics, the research suggests the chief executive officer must be committed to providing the FAR with a clearly defined job role and empower him or her to make decisions in matters pertaining to athletics governance.

Numerous studies have documented high rates of cheating among student-athletes (Storch, Storch, & Clark, 2002). It is possible the high rate of cheating among student-athletes can be attributed to the notion that these students are recruited for their athletic talents and are not prepared for the academic challenges of college. Southall, Nagel, Batista, and Reese (2003) suggest the corporate college athletic system admits ill-prepared students and expects them to perform both on the athletic fields and in the classroom. Storch et al. (2002) suggests athletes resort to cheating in order to meet and maintain eligibility requirements as dictated by their institution and the NCAA. An alternative perspective is athletes cheat because they feel a sense of entitlement and they have a “free pass” from learning because they feel their purpose is to perform on the athletic fields (Lumpkin, 2008). In The Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota v. Haskins (2002), the head coach of the men’s basketball team, Clem Haskins, was
forced to resign following his involvement in an academic fraud scandal (Southall et al., 2003). Between 1993 and 1998, Haskins paid a tutor for the men’s basketball program in return for writing 400 papers for 20 different players. Academic integrity is a cornerstone of the NCAA’s student-athlete model (Jones, 2012). Unfortunately, academic fraud continues to be a major issue further isolating athletic programs from the academic mission of the institution. Research suggests increased faculty involvement in the admissions process of student-athletes is necessary to protect the academic integrity of the institution.

In the world of college sports, institutional rules and standards trump conference and NCAA standards, yet many institutions are reluctant unilaterally to adopt more stringent standards than other schools as this may put them at a competitive disadvantage on the athletic fields (Ridpath, 2008). Division I-A athletics programs present complex issues of institutional oversight and ethical practice for university leadership (Duderstadt, 2003). Competition level in athletics settings can affect the moral reasoning levels of administrators. The pressure athletic directors and coaches have to win may affect their ability to make the best ethical decision on behalf of the university they represent (Spivey, 2008). Furthermore, university presidents may be more likely to sweep unethical decisions by athletic directors and coaches “under the rug” if they are producing winning teams that generate positive publicity and exposure for the university. This creates a need to place greater value on the mission of higher education rather than winning athletics programs.

Despite the dearth of research on best practice governance models at Division I-A institutions, most of the literature suggests increased faculty involvement is central to effective governance and reform. Results from a study by Nichols, Corrigan, and Hardin (2011) support the notion that faculty oversight of intercollegiate athletics is vital to protecting the institutional
mission. In an effort to create transparency between athletics and academics, academic administrators and faculty members must be directly involved in the recruiting process from beginning to end. One potential model to consider is used by the University of Oklahoma where faculty members have the opportunity to review the applications of every marginal recruit to consider whether he or she is a good fit for the institution (Martin & Christy, 2010). Similarly, faculty senates at Pennsylvania State College and the Ohio State University have authority over student participation in athletics. Cooper (1992) suggests FARs should be responsible for evaluating the academic qualifications and abilities of student-athletes upon their entry to the institution. Faculty involvement in the implementation of stricter standards and faculty oversight of the academic integrity of the institution could be critical to bridging the gap between athletics and academics.

The increased commercialism within Division I-A intercollegiate athletics has served as a catalyst for the collaboration of faculty who have a shared interest in reforming “big time” sports programs. The Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA), an alliance of 57 university faculty senates, was founded in 2002 to provide faculty a voice in the national discussion about how to best maintain academic integrity in big-time college sports (Nichols, Corrigan, & Hardin, 2011). In 2008, the John Curley Center for Sports Journalism at the Pennsylvania State College of Communications, in partnership with COIA, launched a research project to assess COIA’s recommended best practices in the following four areas: integrity and quality, student-athlete welfare, campus governance of intercollegiate athletics, and fiscal responsibility. The research team conducted a national survey that gauged the extent to which COIA’s best practices have been adopted by schools competing in big-time college football. Results from the survey suggest big-time athletics programs can protect the core academic values of universities through self-
regulation and internal improvements. However, the best practice recommendations of the COIA need implementation support from both faculty senates and FARs across the country in order to see improvement (Earl, 2004). More importantly, presidents should empower those faculty members who are interested in becoming involved in athletics governance to make decisions that will emphasize academic primacy in sports programs.

**Barriers Faced by FARs**

Despite the call for educational primacy from both the NCAA and faculty reform groups, the reality is often far from the stated ideal (Sharp & Sheilly, 2008). Faculty members who have the desire to be actively involved in the governance of intercollegiate athletics often encounter many obstacles that either prevent their voice from being heard or discourage them to the point where participation is no longer desired. Several studies (Kuga, 1996; Lawrence et al., 2009) suggest lack of time is what prevents reform-minded faculty from investing in athletics governance. Faculty members who want to become involved are afraid the time commitment necessary to be actively involved in athletics governance may interfere with their teaching and research responsibilities. A study conducted by Wolverton (2010) suggests the job of the FAR at Division I-A institutions requires 10 to 15 hours per week and most FARs do not receive any release time from teaching.

At many institutions the chief executive officer appoints a faculty member who supports athletics to serve as FAR because they feel he or she will not “make waves.” Atwell (1991) states, “Some presidents are by no means eager to be caught between the athletic director and coaches, governing board, and boosters on the one hand, and aggressive faculty oversight on the other” (p. 11). The role of the FAR has generated negative perceptions by reform-minded faculty at many institutions because they view those who serve in the position as too friendly to
athletic interests. The skepticism attached to the role of the FAR can act as a barrier to faculty members who genuinely want to serve in this function in order to protect academic integrity but are afraid their peers may perceive them negatively.

Another obstacle that may prevent faculty from becoming involved in athletics governance or serving as the FAR is the lack of support they receive from athletic departments. Coaches and athletic administrators may make decisions without consulting the FAR because they do not believe faculty members have credibility when it comes to understanding the athletic enterprise. Gerdy (2002) suggests faculty who speak out against commercialism and corruption in athletics generally have their voices silenced by the athletics establishment. It should be the responsibility of academic leadership at the local level to restore the voice of faculty in athletics governance by empowering the FAR to be fully involved in all institutional decisions pertaining to athletics.

The single most important role of faculty members in intercollegiate athletics is establishing and maintaining academic standards (Brand, 2007). The commercialism of intercollegiate athletics has contributed to an institutional environment where coaches and athletic administrators may have more authority on campus than faculty members. In order for faculty members to uphold the academic mission of the institution, presidents and chancellors should create a culture where the faculty voice is both heard and respected. As stated in the FAR Handbook (2012), “Because student-athletes are to be students first, faculty voices and perspectives in the administration and oversight of intercollegiate athletics programs have been recognized with the NCAA as legitimate and necessary” (p. 5). Although presidents are required to appeal to a large base of constituents including boosters, governing boards, students and staff, they should not forget that faculty are considered the primary guardians of academic integrity. In
order to promote an institutional culture where the FAR is respected, the president needs to be willing to stand up to alumni, booster groups, and athletic department staff in support of the FAR when unpopular decisions regarding athletics are made (Atwell, 1991).

A review of the literature on academic administration and athletic administration at Division I colleges and universities indicates that each institution operates within its own organizational model. Given the previous research on the subject, it is apparent the absence of faculty in the governance of athletics can have negative consequences for the institution. The position of FAR is necessary to promote academic integrity, protect the well-being of student-athletes, and ensure institutional control. However, the FARs can only be as effective in the governance process as their chief executive officers allow them to be (FARA, 2012). Every institution should create a job description for the FARs so they are aware of their responsibilities. Many faculty members are hesitant to serve as the FAR due to the time commitment. Gerdy (1992) suggests providing release time from teaching would allow FARs to focus on the job responsibilities and potentially enhance the effectiveness of the position. Although the NCAA requires all member institutions to designate a FAR, every institution is different in size and scope. Therefore, it is up to the individual institution at the local level to define the role of the FAR and empower him or her to have a significant voice in the athletics governance process. The annual Faculty Athletics Representatives Association (FARA) meeting provides the opportunity for FARs from all institutions to come together to share best practices.

Research suggests faculty care about the welfare of student-athletes; however, many faculty members have negative perceptions of intercollegiate athletics because they feel athletic programs are disconnected from the academic mission of the institution (Lawrence, 2009). The NCAA requires all member institutions to appoint a FAR to protect academic integrity and
ensure the well-being of student-athletes; however, many FARs are unclear of their responsibilities and oftentimes are not provided with the authority to make decisions pertaining to athletics. University and college presidents should place primacy on the academic mission of the institution and assist FARs in establishing credibility within the athletics governance process by clearly defining the role and responsibilities of the FAR.

Several studies (Lawrence et al., 2009; Weistart, Kliever, Mason & Bergmann, 1990) suggest faculty is typically not involved in the recruiting and admissions process of student-athletes. The same studies indicate institutions typically have lower admissions standards for student-athletes than for non-athletes. Student-athletes who are not prepared for the academic challenges of higher education may be more inclined to cheat (Storch et al., 2002). In order to uphold academic integrity, faculty members, who are the cornerstone of life in higher education, should play a role in the admissions process of student-athletes. Research suggests that, if chief executive officers provided FARs with release time from teaching, they could become more involved in the student-athlete admissions process. Furthermore, chief executive officers at Division I-A institutions should establish selection committees comprised of faculty members to appoint the FAR. If faculty members have a voice in the FAR selection process, they may have a more positive perception of the position.

The role of the FAR is to ensure academic integrity and institutional control of athletics, yet minimal research attention has been directed towards the role of the FAR in athletic governance and decisions involving athletics. Previous studies have focused on the role faculty senates play in athletic governance; however, the specific role of the FAR in decisions involving athletics is unexplored (Minor, 2004). The role of the FAR at Division I FBS institutions needed to be investigated to determine how FARs can revisit admissions standards for student-athletes at
their respective institutions as a means of protecting academic integrity and reversing the impact of commercialization. Furthermore, a key implication of this study was to examine institutional barriers that may prevent FARs from performing their assigned role of ensuring academic integrity of athletics. For the purposes of the current study, a phenomenological approach was appropriate in order to explore the lived experiences of FARs at Division I FBS institutions and gain a deeper understanding of the internal and external forces they may encounter that could prevent them from performing their role of ensuring academic integrity and institutional control of athletics. As a result of the ambiguous role of the FAR at many Division I FBS institutions, phenomenology allowed the researcher to describe the common meaning for several faculty members of their lived experience of serving in the role of FAR at a Division I FBS institution (Creswell, 2012).

Although many colleges and universities have people of integrity in high-level administrative positions, there is a strong need for research to understand what contributes to the lack of institutional control at Division I-A member institutions. Colleges and universities have continued to violate rules, including recruiting violations, improper benefits to student-athletes, and grade manipulation despite calls for reform from the NCAA, the United States Congress, and various leaders in higher education (Frey, 1994). Recent incidents of academic fraud involving student-athletes at the University of North Carolina and NCAA violations committed by coaches at Ohio State University, the University of Miami, and the University of South Carolina demonstrate the need for faculty members to become more proactive in the oversight of athletic programs (Dorhmann, 2012).

At a time when athletic directors and coaches may look to gain every competitive advantage in order to win and improve their respective team’s national credibility, shortcuts can
be taken and rules may be broken. As a result, the credibility of an academic institution can suffer when the violations of the athletic department become exposed. The loosely coupled control structure prevalent in higher education institutions allows athletic departments to operate autonomously from academic administration (Knorr, 2004). Faculty members at Division I-A institutions are concerned the commercialized nature of college athletics clouds the academic mission and creates a chronic conflict between commercial pressures and academic values (Buer, 2009). If one of the primary roles of the FAR is to preserve academic integrity of their respective institution, academic leadership should identify ways to increase FAR involvement in the oversight of athletic departments.

Intercollegiate athletics programs often serve as the “front porch” of institutions of higher education; however, faculty who are the cornerstone of life in higher education, play an undefined, and in many cases, insignificant role in the governance of athletic programs (Gerdy, 2002). Despite the fact the NCAA mandates all member institutions designate a FAR to serve as the faculty voice in matters pertaining to athletics, nearly 40% of Division I-A faculty athletics representatives do not have a job description (Wolverton, 2010). A study by Lawrence (2009) suggests faculty generally feel disconnected from athletics decision-making and believe most decisions involving athletics emphasize the commercial interests of athletics over the university’s academic mission.

**Summary of Literature Review**

Through a review of the literature, the researcher gained a clearer understanding of the challenges faculty at Division I FBS institutions face when attempting to become involved in athletics governance. Faculty members are the primary guardians of academic integrity and should have a stronger voice in matters pertaining to athletics. Academic administration should
promote a culture of organizational responsibility and restore institutional control by increasing faculty participation in athletic governance. Since the NCAA mandates all member institutions designate a FAR, administrators should empower these representatives to have a stronger voice in matters pertaining to athletics.

The emphasis Division I-A colleges and universities place on producing winning athletic programs compromises the academic integrity of the institution because, while the NCAA establishes minimum eligibility requirements for student-athletes, these requirements can be significantly lower than academic admissions standards for non-athletes at Division I-A institutions (Fried, 2007). Faculty members at Division I-A institutions do not perceive lowering academic admissions standards for talented athletes should be tolerated (Lawrence et al., 2009). Nonetheless, while all 351 NCAA Division I-A member institutions have a designated faculty FAR, a review of the literature suggests these representatives seem to have minimal impact in matters relating to athletic governance and the student-athlete admissions process.

Faculty voices and perspectives in the administration and oversight of intercollegiate athletics programs have been recognized by the NCAA as legitimate and necessary (FARA, 2012). Although the NCAA mandates all member institutions must designate a FAR, nearly 40% of current FARs are not provided with a job description by their respective institutions (Wolverton, 2010). Furthermore, nearly one-third of FARs are not consulted on athletics-related decisions, despite the fact FARs are appointed for the purpose of protecting academic integrity and ensuring institutional control of athletics. Role theory was an ideal theoretical framework for this study because it assumes individuals will experience role ambiguity within their organization unless their roles are clearly established. Both role conflict and role ambiguity are directly linked to job dissatisfaction and can occur when job responsibilities are not clearly
articulated to the role recipient (Abramis, 1994). This study applied role theory as a theoretical framework to explore the reasons why FARs are not provided with formal job descriptions or empowered to make decisions relating to the governance of athletics programs. FARs are often excluded from institutional decision-making involving athletics, thus making their role expectation of ensuring the institutional control of athletics difficult. Minimal research attention has been directed towards the role of the FAR in athletic governance and decisions involving athletics. Previous studies have focused on the role faculty senates play in athletic governance; however, the specific role of the FAR in decisions involving athletics is unexplored (Minor, 2004). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine how FARs can uphold their responsibility of protecting the welfare of student-athletes and ensuring the academic integrity and institutional control of athletics.
Chapter Three: Research Design

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current role of the FAR in the governance of athletics at NCAA Division I FBS member institutions where intercollegiate athletics are an integral part of campus life. Through qualitative inquiry, the researcher attempted to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of serving in the role of FAR at institutions where commercialism can threaten the academic integrity and institutional control of athletics.

Research Questions

The primary questions that informed this research include: (1) What does it mean to serve in the role of FAR at NCAA Division I FBS institutions? (2) How do FARs feel their experience in this role allows them to ensure academic integrity and institutional control of athletics? (3) Do FARs perceive their role to be ambiguous? (4) How do FARs feel university leadership can empower them to play a greater role in the governance of athletics?

The researcher’s practical goal was to document the current state of FARs at institutions where athletics play a prominent role in campus life—Division I FBS institutions. Understanding the role the FAR plays in athletic governance can help determine the effectiveness of the position. According to the FAR Handbook (2012), the FAR is expected to play an important role in local institutional control of athletics programs in addition to having a national voice in NCAA legislation. The researcher analyzed the involvement of FARs in institutional decision-making involving athletics. Knowledge of the FARs involvement in athletics governance provides insight into how faculty concerns are addressed at Division I FBS institutions.
Methodology

The goal of the researcher was to explore the lived experiences of FARs at Division I FBS institutions to gain a deeper understanding of the internal and external forces they encounter that prevent them from performing their role of ensuring academic integrity and institutional control of athletics. The researcher selected a qualitative approach because his research questions sought to examine the experience of a group of faculty members facing the same educational issue. Creswell (2012) suggests qualitative inquiry is appropriate when an educational problem needs to be explored. The researcher employed the phenomenological methodology because phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon (e.g., serving in the role of FAR at a Division I FBS institution).

According to the FAR Handbook (2012), “In every case the faculty athletics representative is or should be involved in the assurance of the academic integrity of the athletics program and in the maintenance of the welfare of the student-athlete” (p. 9). However, nearly one-third of FARs at Division I institutions are not consulted on major athletics decisions. Furthermore, nearly 40% of FARs at Division I institutions do not have job descriptions (Wolverton, 2010). As the primary gatekeepers of academic integrity, faculty members do not play a strong role in the athletics governance process. Several studies (Frey, 1994; Nichols, Corrigan, & Hardin, 2011) suggest increased faculty involvement in athletic governance is the key to restoring institutional control. Most importantly, as a result of the lack of a job description, many FARs experience role ambiguity which has a detrimental effect on job satisfaction and on job performance (Abramis, 1994). As a result of the ambiguous role of the FAR at Division I FBS institutions, phenomenology allowed the researcher to describe the
common meaning for several faculty members of their lived experience of serving in the role of FAR at a Division I FBS institution (Creswell, 2012).

The aim of phenomenology is to transform the lived experience into a textural expression of its essence (van Manen, 1990). Due to the dearth of current research focused on the experience of FARs in the athletics governance process, the researcher employed phenomenology in an attempt to understand the awareness of the experience as it is expressed by the participants. The phenomenological approach allowed the researcher to provide a composite description of “what” the participants experienced and “how” they experienced it. For the purposes of this study, the empirical phenomenological approach permitted the researcher to, “determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13).

A researcher uses qualitative inquiry when a problem or issue needs to be explored (Creswell, 2012). Currently, one-third of FARs at Division institutions are not consulted on major athletics decisions and nearly 40% of FARs at Division I institutions do not have job descriptions (Wolverton, 2010). Due to a dearth of literature on the role of the FAR, a qualitative approach allowed the researcher to capture data on the perceptions of FARs in a natural setting. Furthermore, qualitative inquiry permitted the researcher to examine the complexity of the real world by exploring multiple perspectives toward an issue (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

**Site and Participants**

The intent of this study was to explore the role of the FAR at Division I FBS institutions. As a result, the researcher purposefully recruited a homogenous group of five participants. Creswell (2012) suggests purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select individuals and
sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study. In homogeneous sampling the researcher purposefully samples individuals based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics (Creswell, 2012). All FARs belong to a subgroup that is responsible for ensuring academic integrity and institutional control of athletics at their respective institutions. According to the *FAR Handbook* (2012), “FARs should be empowered by the president to be in a position to ensure student-athlete welfare and the academic integrity and institutional control of the athletics program” (p. 4). Therefore, all of the participants were FARs at Division I FBS institutions. The researcher conducted a series of three, semi-structured interviews with each participant via Skype.

**Recruitment and Access**

Qualitative research involves the study of a research site(s) and gaining permission to study the site in a way that will enable the easy collection of data. Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggest qualitative researchers should build open and trusting relationships with potential interviewees prior to collecting data. Securing individuals to participate in a study, building trust and credibility at the field site, and getting people from a site to respond are all important access challenges (Creswell, 2012). The participants in this study were accessed through the researcher’s knowledge of the FAR community.

The researcher sent a formal recruitment letter (Appendix A) via email to ten of the FARs he thought would be willing to participate in the study, informing them of the purpose of the study, and inviting them to participate in the study. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), it is essential for the researcher to earn the trust of the participants. As a result, the researcher offered to answer any questions the potential participants had regarding the purpose of the study via the
telephone or email. Once the participants officially agreed to participate in the study, the researcher obtained legally effective informed consent (Appendix B) from the participants prior to the interview process. Documentation of approval of the study (Appendix C), as well as information about the design of the study, was provided to the participants. All communication with the participants was conducted in a manner that maintained their strict confidentiality and privacy. Due to the limited number of FARs at Division I FBS institutions, the researcher protected the anonymity of the participants and their institutions by assigning aliases in the process of analyzing and reporting the data.

**Data Collection**

For this study, data were collected through a series of three, semi-structured interviews with the participants. All interviews were conducted via Skype. Seidman (1998) suggests researchers should conduct a three-interview series. The first interview focuses on putting the participant’s experience in context, the second interview concentrates on the details of the participant’s present experience, and during the third interview participants are asked to reflect on the meaning of their experience. As a primary consideration for the participants’ time, the researcher conducted one preliminary interview, a second in-depth interview, and a final interview for the purposes of member checking.

The researcher conducted all interviews using an interview protocol (Appendix D). The protocol contained instructions for the process of the interview, the questions to be asked, and a space to take notes of responses from the interviewee (Creswell, 2012). The researcher memorized the interview questions prior to each interview in order to avoid losing eye contact with the participants. All interviews were recorded using an audio-recording device. The researcher also recorded each interview with an application on his mobile phone for back-up
purposes. In addition to asking their permission to be recorded prior to each interview, the participants were also informed of the recording protocol in the consent forms provided to them at the beginning of the study. The researcher also took notes on the interview protocol document throughout the course of each interview.

Documents provide valuable information in helping researchers understand central phenomena (Creswell, 2012). For the purposes of this study, the researcher asked each participant if he or she could provide him with a copy of their FAR job description. Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggest documents are most useful when combined with in-depth interviews. The collection of job descriptions allowed the researcher to look for consistencies as well as contradictions among participants that needed to be explored.

The researcher ensured confidentiality of all research participants throughout the course of the study. First, the researcher protected the anonymity of the participants and their institutions by assigning aliases throughout the data storage, analysis, and reporting processes. Next, the researcher stored all electronic data and interview transcripts in a secure password-protected database located in his home office to which only he had access. In addition, the researcher secured the audio-recording device, interview tapes, transcriptions, laptop computer used to transcribe the data, and hand-written interview notes in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home office. The researcher further safeguarded the anonymity of the participants by having them member check the transcriptions and approve their assigned aliases.

**Data Analysis**

For the purposes of this study, the researcher based the data analysis process on Moustakas’ (1994) modification of the van Kaam (1966) method of analysis of phenomenological data. Each of the seven suggested data analysis steps were repeated for each
interview transcription. The seven sequential steps included: listing and preliminary grouping (horizontalization) of meaning units, reduction and elimination of redundant meaning units, clustering of meaning units into themes, final identification and validation of themes, constructing an individual textural description, constructing an individual structural description, and constructing an individual textural-structural description. Once this process was completed for each transcription, the researcher developed a composite description of the meanings and essences of the experience for the group as a whole.

An important step in phenomenologically analyzing interview data is to have the interview tapes transcribed (Hycner, 1985). After the researcher verified the accuracy of each transcription, he imported the interview files into the computer software program NVivo. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software program designed for researchers working with rich, text-based information, and was selected by the researcher because he used in vivo codes for the initial coding process (Saldana, 2009).

The researcher used the software capabilities of NVivo to highlight significant quotes in different colors as a means of organizing the data. The researcher then coded the data for each transcription. Although the researcher used a theoretical framework to inform his research questions, the data were coded as they appeared. Once the researcher coded each transcript, he made a list of all code words. The researcher then grouped similar codes and look for redundant codes. After the initial coding was completed, the researcher went back to each transcript and reduced the list of codes. Creswell (2012) suggests reducing the list of codes to five to seven themes. The researcher reduced the list of codes to seven primary themes (Creswell, 2012). Using the validated themes, the researcher constructed individual textural descriptions of the experience. Next, the researcher wrote individual structural descriptions based on the textural
description and imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher then wrote textural-structural descriptions for each participant. Finally, from the individual textural-structural description, the researcher wrote a composite description of the essences of the experience.

Limitations

Although this research provided key insights into the role of the FAR at Division I FBS institutions, there are notable limitations to the study. While this study captured a diverse sample of FARs at Division I FBS institutions, the sample size was limited to five participants. As a result, only four percent of the entire FAR population at Division I FBS institutions was represented in this study. However, the sample size of five participants allowed the researcher to deeply explore the lived experiences of FARs at Division I FBS institutions.

Though the findings from this study yielded data that will contribute to the current literature, the role of the FAR is interpreted differently across Division I FBS institutions. As a result, the role expectations and responsibilities of the FAR are different at each Division I FBS institution. In addition, this study captured the experiences of FARs at a very specific type of NCAA member institution. As a result, the findings are limited to Division I FBS institutions and cannot be applied to Division II or Division III institutions.

Finally, the topic of faculty governance of big-time intercollegiate athletics is controversial in nature. The participants in this study were concerned with being anonymous because they could be easily identified based on the small population of FARs at Division I FBS institutions.

Validity and Credibility

Qualitative researchers strive for a deep understanding of a research problem that may involve spending extensive time in the field to collect data from research participants.
Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, the researcher needs to ensure the findings and interpretations are accurate. As a result, the researcher took specific steps to maintain the trustworthiness and validity of the study.

Creswell (2012) suggests qualitative researchers use the process of validation to assess the accuracy of their findings. The researcher employed specific validation strategies to ensure accuracy of the data. First, the researcher ensured the validity of the data by asking the participants to member check the transcriptions following each interview to check for accuracy of the account. Next, in order to account for potential threats to internal validity, the researcher used *epoche*, often referred to as bracketing, to achieve trustworthiness (Moustakas, 1994). Van Manen (1990) states, “Bracketing describes the act of suspending one’s various beliefs in the reality of the natural world in order to study the essential structures of the world” (p. 175). The researcher is a current faculty member who has previously worked in the athletics department at a Division I FBS institution. As a result, the researcher commented on past experiences and biases that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study. Finally, the researcher standardized the interview protocol and procedures to ensure the data collection process was consistent throughout the study.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

When collecting data for a qualitative project, a researcher needs to anticipate ethical issues that are likely to arise in the field (Creswell, 2012). For the purposes of this study, the researcher took the necessary steps to ensure the protection of human subjects. First, the researcher obtained legally effective informed consent from each participant prior to the interview process. The researcher built trust in the participants by informing them of the purpose of the study. In order to maximize the benefits for involvement in the study, the researcher stressed the importance of the knowledge to be gained from the study. During the informed
consent process, the researcher ensured the participants were aware of the following: the right of the participant to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time, the purpose of the study and the procedures used in data collection, the known risks associated with participation in the study, and the expected benefits as a result of the study. Both the researcher and each participant signed the informed consent form prior to the data collection process.

**Conclusion**

The commercialization of intercollegiate athletics at Division I NCAA member institutions could place the academic integrity of these institutions at risk. Every NCAA member institution is required to appoint a FAR to ensure academic integrity and institutional control of athletics. Yet, FARs are often shut out from the decision-making process of intercollegiate athletics programs by athletics directors and coaches (Gerdy, 2002). The purpose of this study was to determine how FARs can revisit admission standards for student-athletes at their respective institutions as a means of protecting academic integrity and reversing the impact of commercialization. The goal of the intended research project was to document the current state of FARs at institutions where athletics play a prominent role in campus life—Division I FBS institutions. Understanding the role the FAR plays in athletic governance helps determine the effectiveness of the position.

Role theory was selected as a theoretical framework for this study because it assumes an individual will experience role ambiguity within their organization unless their roles are clearly established. Nearly 40% of current FARs are not provided with formal job descriptions, nor are they consulted on athletics-related decisions that may impact the academic integrity of the institution. Current literature on faculty governance of athletics is focused on either eliminating or drastically reforming athletics at the Division I level. The results of this study fill a gap in the literature by expanding the academic discussion to include empowering the FAR to ensure
institutional control of athletics. A phenomenological approach allowed the researcher to assess the current state of FARs at institutions that heavily invest in athletics and to identify internal and external forces that prevent FARs from performing their responsibility of ensuring academic integrity and institutional control of athletics. With this understanding, administrators can better assist FARs by equipping them with the resources they need to fulfill their designated duties.
Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current role of the FAR in the governance of athletics at NCAA Division I FBS member institutions where intercollegiate athletics are an integral part of campus life. According to the NCAA, the role of the FAR is to ensure academic integrity and institutional control of athletics, yet minimal research attention has focused on the role of the FAR in the governance of athletics. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to analyze the interview data from five FARs at NCAA Division I FBS member institutions. The participants in this study each provided a detailed account of their experiences as a FAR and how the role fit into the governance structure at their respective institutions.

From the analysis of the interview data, three superordinate themes and nine corresponding subthemes emerged. The superordinate and subthemes are 1) The Role of the FAR, including a) adjusting to the role, b) background experience, and c) shadow program; 2) Responsibilities, including a) impact on faculty duties, b) varying responsibilities, and c) responsibility to student-athletes; 3) Relationships, including a) relationship with the chief executive officer, b) cultivating new relationships, and c) strained relations between athletics and academics. In reflecting on their role as FAR, the participants struggled to articulate an absolute description of their position. More importantly, the participants agreed the FAR plays a marginal role in the governance of athletics at their respective institutions. This chapter will discuss each superordinate theme as well as the subthemes. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the findings.

Role of the FAR

Faculty members who serve as the FAR at Division I FBS institutions often experience a steep learning curve as they transition into the role. The first superordinate theme that emerged in this study captures the participants’ struggles as they transitioned into the role as FAR while
simultaneously attempting to understand the nature of the position. All of the participants in this study were full-time faculty, thus the responsibilities of serving as the FAR were additional to their duties as a faculty member. Furthermore, prior to accepting the FAR position, the participants had little knowledge of the job responsibilities they would assume while serving as the FAR. The data revealed the personal and professional backgrounds of each participant aided in their understanding of the primary function of the FAR. In addition, the participants identified the implementation of a shadow program as key to assisting new FARs transition to the role. Thus, the three subthemes discussed here are: adjusting to the role of FAR, background experience, and shadow program.

**Adjusting to the role of FAR.** The consensus among all participants was that it takes a significant amount of time to comprehend fully the role and responsibilities of the FAR. The participants found it challenging to take on a new role they knew little about, especially considering the demands of serving as full-time faculty members prevented them from investing as much time as they would like in understanding the nuances of the FAR role. Although all of the participants were provided with an official job description for the FAR position, many noted it takes at least two years to adjust to the role and understand how NCAA rules are implemented at the institutional level. Bob stated, “I think most of us admit that it takes a couple of years to really get your feet on the ground about what you do at your particular school.” For the participants in this study, the learning curve as FAR is perpetual. As Calvin explained, “Year one was more about learning and year two, you’re still learning. You’re still learning all the time as FAR.”

When asked by their chancellor or president to serve as the FAR at their respective institutions, all of the participants gladly accepted the role. However, upon accepting the new
position, all of the participants admitted they knew little about the role and responsibilities of the FAR. As stated by Andrew, “I had absolutely no idea what I was getting myself into. I had no idea.” Upon assuming the role of FAR, Calvin quickly learned there was a steep learning curve that came with the position. Although he was a student-athlete and had studied college sports, he found himself in uncharted waters. “Year 1 is . . . They tell you this, too, other FARs, it’s all about just learning. The learning curve’s pretty steep. Still is. If I could learn more, I would be a better FAR already.”

When asked how year one as FAR differed from current day, all five participants affirmed the primary goal year one was understanding their role and responsibilities as FAR. Andrew noted, “It takes awhile to come up to speed with all the dimensions of the FAR position.” He stated his confidence level, with respect to understanding his role as FAR and the application of NCAA rules and regulations, grew after serving in the role for two years. Early in the interview, Bob explained his background as a lawyer assisted in his ability to understand NCAA rules and regulations; however, he acknowledged it can take a couple of years to understand the complexities of the FAR position. He stated, “I have talked to plenty of FARs at other institutions. I think most of us admit that it takes a couple of years to really get your feet on the ground about what you do at your particular school.”

When asked to describe the challenges they faced when adjusting to the role of FAR, participants identified a deficiency of time and poor understanding of the FAR role as primary challenges. David stated, “My first year as the FAR was my last year as associate dean for graduate programs in the business school. That was a busy job, so I kind of had too much to do that first year.” Although he had the opportunity to serve “a year in training” with his predecessor prior to official appointment as FAR, he struggled to understand the role. He
explained:

Year one was difficult because even though I had sort of gone to some of the meetings of the athletic advisory board the year before, and then sat in on some of the other stuff, I still didn’t totally understand the role.

Andrew reflected on the challenges he faced during his first year as FAR. He stated, “Year one was the blind leading the blind. We had a new athletic director, a new chancellor, a new president, and a new football coach. We were all just sort of starting out and trying to figure everything out.”

With regard to adjusting to the role of FAR, all of the participants agreed it takes time to understand the role and responsibilities of the FAR. The steep learning curve that comes with accepting the FAR position is compounded by the reality that the participants have demanding jobs that can prevent them from investing as much time as they would like towards their FAR duties. The participants in this study conveyed shadowing a FAR predecessor for one year prior to assuming the role can be beneficial to understanding the responsibilities of the position.

**Background experience.** For the participants in this study, both their personal and professional experiences with athletics helped them understand the relationship between academics and athletics. Three of the participants indicated their experiences as former student-athletes helped them understand the nature of the FAR role. Calvin stated,

I was a student-athlete. I interacted with my FAR, liked my FAR, and I always thought at that time that would be my dream job someday to be a FAR. That would be really cool so I can do what this guy did for me.

The participants described a specific affinity towards sports and a general respect for student-athletes which aided in their decision to take on the role. Andrew had a natural
appreciation for intercollegiate athletics. As a former student-athlete, he experienced the challenges of balancing academic and athletic commitments. As a faculty member, he often found himself gravitating towards student-athletes, offering advice and support. “I would help them in ways that I could, provide support, provide advice. I would stop by and watch them compete.”

Prior exposure to the governance structure of major Division I college athletics was identified as a key to helping the participants understand the primary function of the FAR. Four of the participants acknowledged their involvement on athletics-related committees prior to serving as FAR aided them in gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the position. As Emily explained, “I do not think I would have had any idea what a FAR did prior to serving on the council.” In addition, participants described how their professional experiences helped them gain a macro-level understanding of how NCAA rules and regulations are implemented at the institution level. During Calvin’s interview, he stated, “I’ve studied athletics. I’ve got many studies on student-athletes. As a scholar, as an academic, serving as FAR is complementary to my work.” The participants noted the FAR should be an individual who has a basic familiarity with the intercollegiate athletics landscape and its governance structure.

**Shadow program.** Due to the drastic learning curve that comes with the position, the first year as a FAR can be extremely challenging. As a result the participants viewed the implementation of a shadow program as a helpful way to transition a new FAR into the role. Three of the five participants had the opportunity to shadow their predecessor prior to assuming the role of the FAR, yet they all emphasized the importance of shadowing as an effective way of transitioning to the FAR position. Although Bob admitted there was a severe learning curve that came with assuming the role of the FAR, he found shadowing the previous FAR was helpful. “I
shadowed him for six months, so I had six months of learning what to expect which was beneficial.” Bob found his six months of shadowing to be an effective way of transitioning into the position. He stated, “I had the opportunity to shadow my predecessor for six months which helped with the learning curve.”

Andrew, who is proactively involved on the national FAR scene, suggested many institutions throughout the country see the value of adopting a shadow program for incoming FARs. He stated, “I am finding more and more institutions are establishing a one-year shadow program, which generally speaking, has helped FARs transition into the role without feeling immediate pressure to know everything immediately upon assuming the position.” The notion of appointing a new FAR without any form of training was concerning for the participants. For them, taking measures, such as implementing a shadow program, can help empower FARs and aid them in their transition to the position.

The experiences of the participants in this study capture the challenges inherent in assuming the role and responsibilities of the FAR at a Division I FBS institution. It can take years before FARs feel both comfortable and capable in the position. Further, the learning curve is perpetual, mainly due, in part, to the constant changes made to NCAA rules and regulations. Athletics awareness is a variable that contributes to the comfort level of FARs. The participants illustrated their personal and professional experiences with intercollegiate athletics contributed to their understanding of the relationship between athletics and academics in a higher education setting. Although only three of the five participants had the opportunity to shadow their FAR predecessor, they all explained how the implementation of a shadow program can not only ease the transition process, but also empower FARs with essential knowledge regarding NCAA policies and procedures prior to assuming the role. It is important for chief executive officers to
understand the challenges new FARs face when transitioning into the role. As a means of enhancing the effectiveness of the FARs, chief executive officers should not only consider appointing FARs with previous athletics experience but also implement a one-year shadow program.

**FAR Responsibilities**

FARs are designated by each NCAA institution to serve as a liaison between the institution and the athletics department, yet each institution determines the role and responsibilities of the FAR at that particular institution. The second superordinate theme in this study captures the participants’ understanding of their role and responsibilities of the FAR at their respective institutions. As full-time faculty members, the participants reflected on the challenges they face when attempting to balance their duties as faculty members with their responsibilities as FARs. All of the participants endured an additional level of stress by agreeing to serve as the FAR, primarily because they felt they did not have enough time to dedicate to their FAR responsibilities. Although all of the participants in this study were provided with job descriptions, they articulated their role as FAR encompasses additional responsibilities that are not outlined in the job descriptions. Further, the participants acknowledged the role and responsibilities of the FAR vary from institution to institution. For them, it can be frustrating when they learn FARs at peer institutions have fewer responsibilities. All of the participants clearly conveyed the importance of protecting student-athlete well-being. As FARs, they felt their most meaningful responsibility was to ensure the institution was serving the best interests of the student-athletes. Thus, the three subthemes discussed here are: impact on faculty duties, varying responsibilities, and responsibility to student-athletes.

**Impact on faculty responsibilities.** The data revealed that serving as a FAR is a major
commitment that can be extremely time-consuming. The participants in this study were heavily invested in their role as FARs and proactive on their respective campuses. It is frustrating for them to know they dedicate a lot of time and energy towards the position knowing some of their counterparts at peer institutions do not make the same investment. The participants often have opportunities to benchmark their responsibilities with FAR colleagues when attending national meetings and conferences. For them, it can be frustrating when they learn their counterparts are not committed to advancing the role of the FAR at a time when commercialism has saturated the college sports landscape. As Calvin explained, “I know FARs at other institutions that do nothing.” During his interview, Andrew stated, “I find many FARs at peer institutions are stay-at-home and are not doing enough to advance the role of the FAR.” Upon accepting the FAR position, the participants revealed they did not fully comprehend how the role, and the time commitment that comes with serving as the FAR, would impact their ability to balance their primary responsibilities as a faculty member. Bob disclosed feeling trepidation about accepting the role as FAR because he was concerned the commitment may impact his teaching load and other institutional obligations.

All five participants expressed feeling an additional layer of stress by serving in the role of the FAR, especially during their first year in the position. The stress was the direct result of the time commitment inherent in the FAR role at their respective institutions. Though the level of stress varied, the participants described the challenges of balancing their faculty responsibilities and their duties as FAR. Andrew stated, “To be an effective FAR, you have to be willing to make a major sacrifice in your faculty career.” Although the participants acknowledged they felt more comfortable as FAR the longer they served in the role, the time commitment presents a consistent challenge. As noted by Bob, “I view this as a fantastic
committee assignment that takes up more duties than a typical committee assignment. I take it seriously, but my teaching load has stayed the same and I still hold some other committee responsibilities campus wide.”

Despite the tremendous time commitment that comes with the position, only two of the participants received compensation for serving as FAR. Calvin receives financial compensation equivalent to one course overload; whereas, Andrew has a reduced teaching load as a result of his FAR responsibilities. When he was appointed FAR eight years ago, Andrew did not receive any special accommodations as consideration for the time he was dedicating to the position. When asked about the compensation he receives, Andrew responded, “I began to track my activities very closely and then had discussions with the chancellor. Within a couple of years, I was moved to 50% release of my faculty duties.” For Calvin, he would like to be more proactive in his role as FAR but his position as department chair is demanding. He stated, “Perhaps I can implement some of the ideas I have in lighter years when I am not the department chair.” The consensus among the participants was that a reduced teaching load would allow them to be more focused on their FAR duties.

**Responsibilities of FARs vary across institutions.** All of the participants in the study were provided with job descriptions that highlighted their primary responsibilities as FAR. The data revealed that despite some similarities with respect to their job descriptions, the role and responsibilities of the participants varied from institution to institution. The consensus among all participants was that many of their FAR duties centered on managing NCAA compliance matters, such as signing student-athlete eligibility forms. However, variables such as conference affiliation, expectations of the chancellor or president, and involvement of the faculty senate in athletics governance contributed to the variation in role expectations and responsibilities.
amongst the participants. Interestingly, the only participant who consistently traveled with athletic teams on road trips was the only FAR who had a reduced teaching load.

All of the participants in this study were involved in the NCAA legislation process at their respective institutions. The consensus was that processing NCAA paperwork for student-athletes was a standard, yet monotonous practice they did not necessarily enjoy. As David explained, “I suppose if there is anything negative, I guess I spend a fair amount of time in NCAA legislation. A lot of that to me is just not all that interesting.” In describing her role in NCAA compliance, Emily stated, “I think that is the less interesting part, and not, maybe, what I want to be known for, so to speak.”

In reflecting on their responsibilities as FAR, all of the participants mentioned conference affiliation played a factor in how frequently they had to travel. They reported their respective conferences required them to travel to FAR meetings at least once a year; however, the frequency of travel varied based on the expectations set by each conference. David explained the conference his institution belongs to expects FARs from member institutions to meet frequently.

The conference my institution belongs to involves the FARs quite heavily in everything and so we meet frequently. I think the FARs are probably more involved in our conference than in many other conferences. Certainly my predecessor had been the FAR when my institution belonged to a different conference and he said they almost never had any conference meetings of the FARs.

When describing his FAR responsibilities, Calvin reported the conference his institution belongs to requires member FARs to meet three times a year to discuss conference legislation and bylaws, student-athlete scholarships, and student-athlete travel. By contrast, Emily noted
she was only required to attend one conference meeting each year.

Due to the limited number of Division I FBS institutions, many FARs have the opportunity to meet peers at national conferences like the NCAA Annual Convention, the 1A FAR Annual Meeting, and the FARA Annual Meeting. For the participants in this study, both the conference meetings and national meetings provide an opportunity for them to benchmark their FAR responsibilities with other FARs. Bob commented on the role and expectations of FARs at peer institutions. He stated, “We are not identical by any means. What I do here is not the same as what my counterparts do at the institutions we compete against, but there are a lot of parallels of course.”

Calvin revealed he often talks to FARs from other institutions to get a sense of their overall commitment to the position. According to Calvin, “I have talked to some FARs, they do not do anything.” As a proactive FAR who has served on a number of national committees, Andrew remarked, “Because of what I’ve done, I mean, it’s very easy for me to tell because if I don’t know you, then that means you’re a stay-at-home FAR.” David believes his job as FAR is easier than some of his counterparts at peer institutions, mainly because he does not have to answer to a faculty senate. He stated, “A lot of my counterparts at the other schools are pretty heavily involved with the faculty senate, they present reports and stuff like that. Here, we do not have any faculty senate, so there is none of that.” Interestingly, Emily traveled to the FARA Annual Meeting during her first year as FAR to get a better sense of how the position is applied at peer institutions. She recounted her experience speaking with other FARs,

I was surprised that there weren’t clearer visions of the position out there.

Frankly, I felt like coming, after having talked to a lot of the FARs there, and hearing all of the talks and stuff, I didn’t think that anybody had a clear grasp on
It seemed like just listening to the questions and answers, that everybody else was just as confused or piecing this job together just as much as I feel like I have.

Although all of the participants confirmed their FAR job descriptions highlighted the primary tenets of their role, they acknowledged their responsibilities as FAR go beyond the job description. Furthermore, the participants admitted the role and responsibilities of the FAR can vary from institution to institution.

**Responsibility to student-athletes.** All of the participants felt strongly about their duty as FAR to protect the academic integrity of the student-athlete population at their respective institutions. As explained by Bob, “My primary concern is the student side of the student-athlete.” Four of the five participants actively reviewed the Academic Progress Rate (APR) for each athletic team at their institution to ensure they were meeting the standards set forth by the NCAA. For the participants, accepting the FAR position provided an opportunity for them to ensure student-athletes were performing in the classroom, rather than on “the field of play.” As the FAR, David conducts a bi-annual academic progress review of all student-athletes at his institution. When asked to reflect on his role as FAR, Bob described himself as, “The liaison between the academic side and the athletic department. I watch out for academic integrity and the welfare of our student-athletes as students.” Although only one of the participants is directly involved in the admissions process for student-athletes, all participants played a role in monitoring the academic progress of student-athletes.

The participants in this study believed one of the primary roles as FAR was to protect the best interests of student-athletes. For them, the time commitment and demands that are inherent in competing as a student-athlete at the Division I level was a concern. As noted by Bob, “My primary role is to make sure that our student-athletes are getting a great opportunity for a well-
rounded education and that we have appropriate support for them from start to beginning and opportunities for success.” In fact, Bob is frequently involved in the hiring process of coaches to ensure the candidates value the “student” role of the student-athlete. He stated, “I have been involved in the hiring of coaches to make sure this new coach is going to be putting students first.”

As a byproduct of serving as the FAR, the participants in this study often found themselves defending student-athletes when in the company of their faculty peers. According to the participants, the revenue generating teams at their respective institutions, such as football and men’s basketball, tend to include student-athletes on the lower level of the academic preparedness spectrum. As a result, faculty can be guilty of lumping all student-athletes into one general category and attaching a negative stigma to them. Emily suggested she was empathetic towards the plight of the student-athlete and the unwarranted disdain they may receive from faculty who do not believe athletics is important to the educational mission of the institution. She stated, “I have a natural interest in the student-athletes themselves. I think maybe the most important thing is just to show them there is someone on their faculty that likes them.” Although Andrew admitted there are student-athletes at his institution that do not particularly invest in the “student” aspect of being a student-athlete, he felt the negative stigma attached to student-athletes was unwarranted. “Most of our student-athletes are really quite interested in their education. It’s just a small minority that are suffering through a situation where they’re not.”

Despite the challenges they faced in balancing their duties as faculty members with their responsibilities as FAR, all of the participants in this study embraced the notion of protecting the welfare of student-athletes. For them, the responsibility of guarding student-athlete well-being superseded all other FAR duties. Due to the demands of competing at the highest level of
intercollegiate athletics, the participants wanted to ensure student-athletes had the appropriate
time and resources to succeed in the classroom. Although the role and responsibilities of the
FARs in this study varied from institution to institution, the participants clearly conveyed their
obligation to ensure the academic integrity of athletics and protect student-athlete welfare
aligned with their mission as faculty members. The notion of providing FARs with release time
from teaching would allow them to dedicate the sufficient time to the role that the
responsibilities command.

Relationships

As a direct result of their role as FAR, all of the participants in this study were able to
establish a wide breadth of new relationships within their institutional communities. The duties
inherent in the FAR role exposed the participants to institutional constituents, such as the
chancellor or president, athletics department administrators and staff, faculty members from
different academic disciplines, and student-athletes. Further, the participants had the opportunity
to develop relationships with faculty from peer institutions when attending FARA meetings, 1A
FAR meetings, NCAA meetings and conventions, and conference-related meetings. The third
superordinate theme that emerged from this study captures the participants’ feelings regarding
the relationships they developed through serving as the FAR. Although most of the relationships
were positive in nature, several of the participants indicated they experienced negative feedback
from their faculty peers as a result of serving as the FAR. In addition, several of the participants
recounted negative interactions with athletics department administrators and coaches. Thus, the
three subthemes discussed here are: relationship with the chief executive officer, cultivating new
relationships, and strained relations between athletics and academics.

Relationship with the Chief Executive Officer. All of the participants were appointed
to serve as FAR by the chief executive officer of their respective institutions. When asked how they became engaged in the role, they communicated the president or chancellor contacted them directly and asked if they would serve as the FAR. The consensus among all participants was that they were appointed to the position for one of two reasons, either they were recommended to the president or chancellor by the previous FAR or they earned the trust of the president or chancellor based on their previous work on athletics-related committees. When describing how he became the FAR, Calvin explained, “When the previous FAR was retiring the president asked for her feedback and recommendations for a replacement. He interviewed me and it really was not much of an interview. It was just discussion and he offered me the position.” For Bob, he attributes his FAR appointment to his diligent work on several athletics-related committees. Similarly, Emily pointed to her previous work on the athletic council as the reason she was appointed as FAR by the chancellor. David’s road to serving as the FAR began nine years ago when he received a call from the President’s Office. He explained, 

I just got a call from the President’s Office one summer some years ago and he asked to see me. They did not say what it was about, so I went over. He asked me take over as the faculty rep starting a year later.

The participants expressed they enjoyed the direct line of communication to their president or chancellor that the FAR position afforded them. Andrew described how his relationship with the chancellor has garnered him power on campus. “I can wield a lot of power, but it’s not in black and white. It’s by being knowledgeable and everybody knows that I have the chancellor on speed dial.” Interestingly, none of the participants in this study are formally assessed or evaluated as FAR, they simply serve at the pleasure of the president or chancellor. As described by Calvin, “We don’t have faculty senate oversight. No voting. It’s you serve at
the wishes of the president. I could be out tomorrow. Someone else could be in. It’s completely his deal.” Of the five FARs who were interviewed for this study, only Calvin mentioned his institution establishes term limits for the FAR; however, he explained, “Although, you sign a three year contract, it doesn’t mean anything. I didn’t actually sign anything.” Despite being told by his president he would serve as FAR for five or six years, David has been the FAR for over nine years. He stated,

When I started the job, the president said he thought that five or six years was more or less appropriate. I think that was what the two previous FARs had served, but obviously I’m well beyond that now. It’s pretty much at the pleasure of the president. If he wants to make a change, he’ll make a change.

Overall, the participants appreciated the level of access they were granted to their chief executive officer as a result of serving in the FAR position.

**Strained relations between athletics and academics.** The participants expressed difficulty in articulating their role as FAR to their faculty peers. Despite having a job description outlining their FAR responsibilities, the participants found it challenging to provide a clear definition that encompasses what they do as FAR. Furthermore, the participants experienced varying levels of indifference when communicating their role as FAR to peers. As Andrew described, “My colleagues in my department are virtually clueless in terms of my activities as FAR. I try to explain some things, but they just don’t get it. They don’t understand what I do and why I would do that.” When describing his interactions with faculty peers regarding his role as FAR, Calvin stated, “They think the FAR doesn’t do anything. They have heard stories about FARs getting co-opted, they’re on the university-owned jet, they’re out to the games, and they’ve got the gear.” For Emily, she revealed the faculty senate at her institution “aren’t
overwhelmingly excited” about the FAR position. The participants described themselves as liaisons between academics and athletics. Due to the nature of the FAR position, the participants frequently engaged with members of their respective athletic departments, including athletic administrators and coaches. When asked about their role as the FAR, all five of the participants confirmed they experienced a level of dissention between academics and athletics. Although the degree of dissention varied by institution, the participants acknowledged the conflict made it more difficult for them to execute their responsibilities as FAR. For Calvin, he perceives his institution would not appoint a FAR if the NCAA did not mandate every member institution have one. When he interacts with representatives from the athletics department, it is mainly for the purposes of signing waivers or ensuring athletics understands NCAA policies. “If they didn’t have to have a FAR, they wouldn’t have a FAR. If it wasn’t mandated by the NCAA, very few schools would have a faculty rep.”

Andrew explained the dichotomy between faculty and athletic department staff at his institution. He explained faculty members are invested in the academic success of students; whereas, athletic department administrators and coaches are under tremendous pressure to win. He stated,

The whole athletic business is this revolving door of people jumping around to different institutions. That’s the way it works. It’s the only real way for advancement. It’s a total contrast to what a faculty member’s career is because most faculty get started at an institution and never leave.

From the day she began serving as FAR, Emily perceived a divide existed between athletics and academics. Members of athletic administration felt faculty “hated” them because the institution recently made a significant financial investment in raising the athletic profile of
the institution. Furthermore, she believed many of her colleagues did not trust athletics. She was in a difficult position. “We are in this current climate that’s highly contentious between the faculty and athletics. Our faculty senate just doesn’t trust athletics. I am supposedly on the athletics side, and therefore, they are not supposed to trust me.”

Two of the participants recounted times as FAR when members of the athletic department were involved in major scandals. Because of these scandals, the participants were placed in uncomfortable positions. They articulated how negative media stemming from the athletics department was viewed as a “black eye” amongst their faculty peers. When reflecting on his first year as FAR, Andrew stated,

> We had a recruiting scandal. We had some ugly stuff that occurred here. One of the outcomes of that in the end was that our football coach was fired. Our athletic director was fired. Our campus chancellor was fired and the president of our four-campus system was fired.

Bob described a similar experience during his first few days as FAR.

> Just as I took over the FAR position our athletic director was arrested for driving under the influence. Of course, he had been in all sorts of public service announcements about “Don’t Drink and Drive” so he was let go.

Despite the constant potential of drawing negative media attention, all participants were supportive of athletics and cared first and foremost about the well-being of student-athletes.

**Cultivating new relationships.** The experience of meeting administrators, coaches, and staff from athletics is something all of the participants enjoyed about their role as FAR. The participants described the FAR position afforded them the opportunity to meet individuals across different departments they may not have met otherwise. When reflecting on her experience as
FAR, Emily stated,

What I would say about the experience is, it is pretty cool, because you are
situated in a position where you are working with everybody from the chancellor,
to athletic director, to just your everyday student-athlete. And that is quite a range
that I would not have experienced in my position otherwise.

David explained his experience as FAR provided him with the opportunity to cultivate
new relationships within his institution, which was a feature of the position he enjoyed. He
stated, “Certainly, one thing that I have enjoyed is I have gotten to meet a whole new set of
people that I just did not know before.” In addition to developing relationships with student-
athletes, coaches and athletic administrators, serving as the FAR has presented him with the
opportunity to cultivate relationships with a number of individuals on a national level. “It is just
a whole new set of contacts that I would not have had otherwise.”

Perhaps most significantly, the favorite aspect of serving as FAR for all participants was
building relationships with student-athletes. Although all of the participants mentioned their
affinity towards cultivating relationships with student-athletes, their level of commitment varied.
For instance, three of the five participants noted they actively attend home athletics events as a
way to demonstrate to student-athletes that they care about them. As noted by David, “It is fun
to see the kids compete. It is interesting to see that even the sports where there might be a
hundred people watching, they take it just as seriously and play just as hard as the more high
profile sports.” Only one of the participants noted he holds office hours every week at the
athletic support center specifically for the opportunity to engage with student-athletes in a one-
on-one setting.

The participants in this study clearly conveyed the importance of protecting the well-
being of student-athletes. For them, watching out for the best interests of the student-athletes and ensuring they have the appropriate resources to succeed on and off the field of play was central to their role as FAR. When asked to describe his role as FAR, Bob stated,

My primary role is to make sure that our student-athletes are getting a great opportunity for a well-rounded education and that we have appropriate support for them from start to finish and opportunities for success. So, I am looking out for their interest.

Emily reflected on her experience as a student-athlete to help her identify how she could protect the best interests of student-athletes at her institution. She explained,

As a former athlete I have much more natural interest in the student-athletes themselves. What are they lacking in terms of resources? How can they balance things better? How can we help them get the things they need without being unfair to the rest of the campus?

Despite the fact all participants enjoyed developing relationships with student-athletes, there was a consensus that their limited time prevented them from being as proactive as they would like to be in this facet of the position. Four of the five participants mentioned they periodically attended Student-Athlete Advisory Council (SAAC) meetings when time permitted. One of the participants acknowledged his busy schedule prevented him from initiating new programs aimed at strengthening relationships between student-athletes and their coaches. Calvin explained, “I would like to implement a program where student-athletes sign up their professors to attend one of their practices and get their coaches to attend one of their lectures. Perhaps, I can implement this in lighter years.”

Although the participants often found it challenging to articulate the function of the FAR
clearly to their peers, they revealed large pockets of faculty at their respective institutions generally support athletics. The responsibilities of the FAR provided the participants with opportunities to interact with faculty members from various departments and disciplines. As liaisons between academics and athletics, the participants felt it was important for faculty to support the mission of athletics in addition to the well-being of student-athletes. Bob explained that most faculty at his institution were accommodating of student-athletes when they were forced to miss an exam due to athletics-related travel. For David, although he periodically heard complaints from faculty peers that some student-athletes were missing too many classes, his overall feeling was that faculty supported athletics. He stated, “I have actually been a little surprised here at the degree of support on the part of the faculty for the athletics program.”

As a result of their appointment as a FAR, the participants in this study were provided with opportunities to develop new relationships within their institutional community. In addition, the participants had opportunities to cultivate relationships with administrators and faculty from peer institutions. For them, the FAR position enabled them to meet individuals to whom they would not have ordinarily been exposed within the scope of their duties as a faculty member. Although several of the participants noted negative interactions with institutional constituents while serving as FAR, they all agreed engagement with student-athletes was their favorite aspect of the FAR position. Despite the fact all of the participants in this study had previous experience with athletics prior to assuming the FAR role, they were rarely consulted on athletics-related decisions, thus making it difficult to fulfill the responsibility of ensuring the institutional control of athletics. Athletics administrators and staff often perceive faculty members lack credibility when it comes to understanding the organizational dynamics of big-time college athletics. Therefore, they do not believe faculty should have a strong voice in
athletics-related decisions.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current role of the FAR in the governance of athletics at NCAA Division I FBS member institutions where intercollegiate athletics are an integral part of campus life. An analysis of the interview data unveiled three superordinate themes that captured the essence of what it is like to serve in the role as FAR at a Division I FBS institution. There was a consensus among all participants that it takes a significant amount of time to comprehend the role and responsibilities of the FAR. Despite the fact all participants acknowledged serving as the FAR comes with an added set of responsibilities, they all felt the work they were doing as FAR was beneficial to the mission of their respective institutions. For the participants, building new relationships within their educational communities, most notably with student-athletes, was the most rewarding benefit of serving as the FAR. Furthermore, all participants were appointed to the FAR by either their chancellor or president. As a result, the nature of the position allowed them to have a direct line of access to the highest ranking administrator at their institution.

Although none of the participants admitted to feeling pressure to accept the FAR position, they all acknowledged there was a steep learning curve to understand the role and responsibilities of the FAR. In fact, all participants stressed serving as the FAR is a constant learning process, especially when it comes to understanding and keeping up to speed with NCAA rules and regulations. Although none of the participants could quantify the number of hours they dedicate to FAR duties, they all communicated it can be a time-consuming assignment. Interestingly, only two of the five participants receive a reduced teaching load or financial compensation for serving as the FAR. This finding is significant because it suggests
many chief executive officers do not provide FARs with the institutional resources they need to be effective in the role.

While all five participants acknowledged they are required to sign student-athlete eligibility waivers, only one of the five participants acknowledged he is directly involved in the admissions process for student-athletes. In fact, one of the participants was told by his president to “stay out of admissions.” For most participants, the duties of serving as FAR are already so time consuming that they do not want to take any additional responsibilities, such as becoming involved in the admissions process for student-athletes. The reality that every FAR is a faculty member with a myriad of responsibilities can prevent him or her from being more proactive in the role as FAR. Further, this research contributes to the current literature by suggesting many FARs are intentionally kept out of the student-athlete admissions process in order to allow institutions to take risks on students with athletic talent but marginal academic aptitude.

In order to uphold the guiding principles of the FAR set forth by the NCAA, the individual serving in the role must be consistently objective. Often times, FARs can be showered with gifts from athletics including athletic gear, tickets to games, and the opportunity to travel with teams to away games. As noted by Andrew, many FARs have been labeled as “jock sniffers” by their faculty peers because they have taken advantage of the access the position provides them to athletics. As a result, the participants felt it was a challenge to find the delicate balance of supporting the mission of athletics without giving off the perception to their faculty peers that they were “drinking the athletics Kool-Aid.” The findings support the notion that many qualified faculty may be reluctant to serve as the FAR for fear of alienating their peers based on the FAR’s association with athletics.

All of the participants believed it is important for FARs to be respectful of the challenges
student-athletes face when attempting to balance the commitment of being a full-time student while enduring the rigors inherent in competing at the highest level of intercollegiate athletics. As a result, all of the participants perceived focusing on student-athlete welfare was a top priority for them as a FAR. At a time when many Division I student-athletes perceive their athletic skills are being used by their respective institutions for financial gain, it is important for them to know FARs are supporting their well-being as individuals.

The participants’ inability to articulate their role and function as FAR clearly to institutional constituents was distressing. To them, being the FAR was important to the academic mission and meant they were “a liaison between academics and athletics.” However, they felt many of their faculty peers did not understand, nor see the importance of the FAR to the academic mission, thus contributing to the current literature by suggesting the FAR is a frequently misunderstood role. In fact, one of the participants felt she was in a difficult position serving as the FAR at her institution because the faculty senate “does not trust” athletics. This finding is significant because it demonstrates the philosophical divide between athletics and academics that exists at many Division I FBS institutions. Although most of the participants acknowledged there would be “pockets or clusters” of faculty at every institution that are not supportive of athletics, they felt it was incumbent upon them to “bridge the gap” between academics and athletics by being proactive in the role and educating their peers about their primary duties as FAR. It would be beneficial for institutions that compete in Division I athletics to educate their respective educational communities about the importance of the FAR role so they do not experience alienation from their peers based on their association with athletics.

This chapter summarized the narrative report of FAR experiences in the governance of athletics at Division I FBS institutions. The following chapter will include a summary of the
significance of these findings, the correlation of the findings to the theoretical framework and existing literature, and implications for future practice.
Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications

This study employed a phenomenological analysis to investigate the role of the FAR at Division I FBS institution. Through qualitative inquiry, the researcher attempted to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of serving in the role of FAR at institutions where athletics play a prominent role in campus life. The goal of this study was to explore the lived experiences of FARs at Division I FBS institutions in order to understand the internal and external forces they encounter that may prevent them from performing their role of ensuring academic integrity and institutional control of athletics. Furthermore, a key implication of this study was to examine institutional barriers that may prevent FARs from performing their assigned role of ensuring academic integrity of athletics.

This research was guided by the following research questions: (1) What does it mean to serve in the role as FAR at NCAA Division I FBS institutions? (2) How do FARs feel their experience in this role allows them to ensure academic integrity and institutional control of athletics? (3) Do FARs perceive their role to be ambiguous? (4) How do FARs feel university leadership can empower them to play a greater role in the governance of athletics?

Three superordinate themes emerged from an analysis of the interview data, including 1) The Role of the FAR, 2) Responsibilities, and 3) Relationships. This section provides an interpretation of each theme and demonstrates how it relates to the theoretical framework and existing literature. In addition, this section details the scholarly significance of the research and implications for practitioners in higher education.

The Role of the FAR

The findings in this study both confirm and contradict the existing literature on the involvement of FARs in the governance of athletics. Participants reflected on the challenges they encountered when attempting to transition into the role of the FAR. The participants
perceived the ambiguous nature of the FAR position as a primary factor in the long adjustment period. All of the participants were provided with a job description upon assuming the FAR role, contradicting Wolverton’s (2010) assertion that less than 40% of FARs are provided with formal job descriptions. However, even with the job descriptions, the participants found it challenging to take on a new role they previously knew little about. Further, the demands of serving as full-time faculty members prevented them from investing as much time as they would like in understanding the nuances of the FAR role. Once acclimated to the role, the participants realized the FAR position is marginally involved in the oversight of athletics and is mainly compliance-based. This study confirmed Wolverton’s (2010) contention that nearly one-third of FARs are not consulted on athletics-related decisions, despite the fact FARs are appointed for the purpose of protecting academic integrity and ensuring institutional control of athletics. This study also supports Newman, Miller, and Bartee’s (2000) assessment that the FAR does not carry much weight or have a strong voice in the athletics governance process.

This research contradicted Ott’s (2011) assertion that faculty members should be the most important stakeholder group in athletics governance based on their engagement with student-athletes in the classroom as well as their collective governance oversight of academic matters. Participants enjoyed their engagement with student-athletes and were responsible for tracking the academic progress of student-athletes; however, the FARs in this study did not have a strong voice in the overall governance of athletics. This study supports Gerdy’s (1992) contention that faculty have little authority over or input into athletics policy making, rather they are limited to reviewing and enforcing policy. Athletic administrators and coaches were deemed to have more authority in athletics decision-making than any of the participants in this study.
This research provided deeper insight into the importance of the FAR’s role in protecting the academic welfare and overall well-being of student-athletes. The findings indicate FARs highly value the role of protecting the academic integrity of student-athletes. This study affirmed Bok’s (2009) contention that faculty members have the greatest stake in preserving proper academic standards and principles since these values protect the integrity of their work. All five participants indicated ensuring academic integrity represented the most important tenet of their FAR role. The findings support the notion that the opportunity to engage with student-athletes and look out for their best interests as students was a primary motivator for the participants to accept the FAR position.

The idea of emphasizing the “student” in the student-athlete was supported by all five participants in this study. The *FAR Handbook* (2012) states, “Because student-athletes are to be students first, faculty voices and perspectives in the administration and oversight of intercollegiate athletics programs have been recognized with the NCAA as legitimate and necessary” (p. 5). Although the results support the suggestion that the “student” in student-athlete should be emphasized, the findings contradict the notion that faculty should have a strong voice in the governance of athletics. Furthermore, the study confirms Wolverton’s (2010) assertion that many conferences allow FARs virtually no role in their conference governance structure, and often fail to nominate FARs for divisional governance positions on councils, cabinets, and committees. As noted by Calvin, he wished the FAR position “had more teeth.”

This study revealed it can take upwards of two years before FARs truly understand their role, but even then the learning curve is perpetual. In fact, all of the participants indicated they struggled to articulate what they do as a FAR to their peers, mainly due to the ambiguous nature of the position. Three of the five participants indicated their job description does not truly
encapsulate what they do as FARs. Further, the role and responsibilities of the FAR differ across each of the NCAA member institutions, which creates another cloud of ambiguity and makes it more challenging for FAR peers to share best practices. Additionally, NCAA policies and procedures change at such a rapid pace, making it increasingly difficult for FARs to understand how the changes impact their role at the institutional level. Recent efforts have been made by FARA to develop orientation and professional development programs for FARs, however NCAA policies and procedures change at such a rapid pace that FARs are constantly trying to keep pace and understand how the changes impact their role at the institutional level. All of the participants in this study suggested NCAA member institutions should implement a shadow program to assist new FARs with the transition process. Therefore, further investigation into the implementation of shadow programs would help assess the effectiveness of this measure.

The NCAA requires all member institutions to appoint a FAR to protect academic integrity and ensure the well-being of student-athletes. The participants in this study were ardent supporters of student-athletes; however, they had little authority in making decisions that would positively impact the “student” side of the student-athlete. Only one of the five participants had a role in the student-athlete admissions process. Despite the fact many of the participants developed relationships with members of their respective athletic departments during their tenure as FAR, they often felt dismissed when time came to make athletics-related decisions that could impact the public perception of the institution. This finding is valuable because, while FARs want to ensure the academic reputation of their institution is protected, they are often not consulted on athletics-related decisions that can negatively affect the institution’s public image.

This study affirmed Gerdy’s (2002) contention that intercollegiate athletics programs often serve as the “front porch” of institutions of higher education; however, faculty who are the
cornerstone of life in higher education, play an undefined, and in many cases, insignificant role in the governance of athletic programs. The findings complicate Bess and Dee’s (2008) suggestion that ambiguity and misinterpretation of roles are prime sources of problems in the internal organization of colleges and universities. Although the participants indicated their job descriptions and role responsibilities were relatively ambiguous, they were genuinely happy to serve as FAR. They attributed their engagement with student-athletes as their favorite attribute of the position. Further, Abramis’s (1994) tenets of role theory maintain role ambiguity is directly linked to job dissatisfaction, yet none of the participants indicated they were unhappy serving in the role as FAR. This study’s findings suggest FARs are not dissatisfied serving in the role, but rather want their authoritative power to be more clearly delineated. Further investigation into the primary sources of dissatisfaction amongst FARs is recommended.

Additionally, this research supported Katz & Kahn’s (1978) suggestion that role senders consider the personal attributes of the people to whom they send roles and modify the sent role based on their understanding of the characteristics of the focal person. All of the participants in the study were appointed to the FAR role by their role sender, the institution’s chief executive officer. These findings complicate the results from Wolverton’s (2010) study in which he maintained nearly 50% of FARs is appointed with approval of a campus faculty-governance body. The findings revealed the chancellor or president handpicked the participants because he or she trusted them. Additional research should be conducted to better understand how the relationship between the FAR and chief executive officer may impact the FAR’s ability to complete his or her tasks in an objective fashion. Further, all of the participants had previously demonstrated a knowledge of or experience with athletics prior to their appointment as FAR.
This study’s findings suggest additional research is needed to examine how FARs are appointed to the role and what personal attributes make them viable candidates for the position.

**Responsibilities**

The FARs in this study indicated their responsibilities as FAR consume a tremendous amount of time. Unfortunately for them, time is a luxury they do not have due to their duties and responsibilities as full-time faculty members. Although all of the participants indicated they were committed to their responsibilities as FAR, they articulated the challenges of balancing their dual roles as both faculty member and FAR.

Historically, faculty has been reluctant to become involved in the governance of athletics for fear of taking on an additional responsibility. At higher education institutions, faculty members who may want to become involved are afraid the time commitment necessary to be actively involved in athletics governance may interfere with their teaching and research responsibilities. The participants in this study revealed they had little understanding of the time commitment necessary to serve as the FAR prior to assuming the position. They found it challenging to quantify the number of hours per week they dedicated to the role, mainly because the time investment varies from week to week. These findings support Kuga’s (1996) contention that faculty involvement in athletics oversight can be a time consuming endeavor.

All of the participants were heavily invested in their responsibilities as FAR, yet only one of the participants reported receiving release time from teaching as a result of serving in the role. The results contradict Gerdy’s (1992) assertion that all Division I FARs should be granted release time from teaching in order to enhance the effectiveness of the position. Not only would release time provide FARs with adequate time to focus on the responsibilities, it may also provide incentive for faculty who were previously fearful of becoming involved in athletics governance due to the time commitment to want to serve as the FAR. The FARs in this study
accepted the FAR role based on two primary variables: their appreciation for athletics and the fact they were asked by their respective chief executive officers to serve in the role. Upon assuming the role, the participants had a vague understanding of how the FAR responsibilities would impact their duties as faculty members, yet this did not deter them from accepting the position. As a result, the findings complicate Lawrence, Ott, and Hendrick’s (2009) analysis on faculty perceptions of athletics reform, in which they reported lack of time and fear of commitment prevents reform-minded faculty from investing in athletics governance.

The findings in this study support the current scholarship implying each higher education institution operates within their own organizational model. Moreover, the role and responsibilities of the FAR are interpreted differently across institutions. All of the participants in this study were provided with a job description upon assuming the FAR position, which is contradictory to Wolverton’s (2010) assertion that roughly 40% of Division I FARs do not have a formal job description. However, the results of this study indicate FAR responsibilities go beyond what is outlined in a job description. Future studies should focus on tracking and outlining the entire scope of FAR responsibilities across Division I FBS institutions. This information could help institutions develop more accurate job descriptions and provide new FARs with a better understanding of their responsibilities.

The notion of protecting the academic integrity of student-athletes was supported by all of the participants in this study. The FAR Handbook (2012) states,

Local duties of faculty athletics representatives vary from institution, but in every case the faculty athletics representative is or should be involved in the assurance of the academic integrity of the athletics program and in the maintenance of the welfare of the student-athlete. (p. 10)
Several participants in this study reported involvement in monitoring the APR for each athletic team at their institution; however, only Andrew indicated he was involved in the admissions process for student-athletes. He explained his institution began involving the FAR in the student-athlete admissions process only following a series of scandals involving members of the athletics department. The findings are contrary to Cooper’s (1992) research implying FARs should be responsible for evaluating the academic qualifications and abilities of student-athletes prior to their acceptance into the institution. The current scholarship on faculty governance of athletics suggests institutions typically have lower admissions standards for student-athletes than for non-athletes. For the participants in this study, the institutional responsibility of protecting academic integrity was central to their role and supports Nichols, Corrigan, and Hardin’s (2011) assertion that faculty oversight of intercollegiate athletics is vital to protecting the institutional mission. Further research is warranted on FAR involvement in the student-athlete admissions process as a means of understanding how they can strengthen their oversight of academic integrity.

According to the *FAR Handbook* (2012), FARs are responsible for ensuring the institutional control of the athletics program. The FARs in this study were often excluded from institutional decision-making involving athletics, thus making their role expectation of ensuring the institutional control of athletics difficult. The findings are consistent with Thompson, McNamara, and Hoyle’s (1997) interpretation of role theory, which posits role conflict and role ambiguity can occur when personal and organizational expectations are not met. The participants in this study suggested they are not provided with the necessary power or authority by their chief executive officers’ to ensure their responsibility of maintaining the institutional control over the athletics program is met. In many instances, athletics department administrators
and coaches are provided with the autonomy to make athletics-related decisions without consulting the FAR. Further research is warranted on fully understanding the key stakeholders involved in the decision-making process as it pertains to athletics. This information would enlighten the academic community and provide university administrators with a better understanding of how the inclusion of FARs in the governance process would help maintain the institutional control of athletics programs.

In addition, the scholarly literature on role theory suggests role conflict is a state of cognition of a role incumbent characterized by incongruity or incompatibility of expected behaviors communicated by the incumbent’s role senders. The findings in this study confirm Bess and Dee’s (2008) contention that inadequate time and logical or ethical incompatibilities are primary sources of role conflict. All of the participants indicated lack of time prevented them from further dedicating themselves to their FAR duties. Further, many of the participants implied their chief executive officer and athletics director were the primary stakeholders in the decision-making process for athletics. Calvin revealed his president explicitly told him to stay out of the student-athlete admissions process. This study provides valuable insight into the barriers FARs face when attempting to execute their responsibilities of ensuring academic integrity and institutional control of the athletics program. If university administrators are aware of the institutional obstacles FARs currently face, they can assist in removing the barriers that prevent FARs from being effective.

**Relationships**

The final superordinate theme that emerged from this study captures the participants’ feelings regarding the relationships they developed through serving as the FAR. The faculty members who participated in this study revealed the FAR role provided them with the
opportunity to develop relationships with a variety of constituents, including the chief executive officer, athletics department administrators and staff, faculty members from different academic disciplines, and student-athletes. Further, the participants had the opportunity to develop relationships with faculty from peer institutions when attending FARA meetings, 1A FAR meetings, NCAA meetings and conventions, and conference-related meetings. Although most of the relationships were positive in nature, several of the participants indicated they experienced negative feedback from their faculty peers as a result of serving as the FAR. In addition, several of the participants recounted negative interactions with athletics department administrators and coaches.

All of the participants in this study were handpicked by their respective chief executive officers to serve as the FAR, thus supporting Wolverton’s (2010) study in which he reported more than half of Division I FARs are appointed without an election process. There was a consensus among the participants that their appointment as FAR was directly attributed to either their relationship with the preceding FAR or their previous work on an athletics-related committee, which helped them earn the trust of the chancellor or president. The findings in this study contradict the AAUP (2002) recommendation that all NCAA member institutions establish an election process for the appointment of the FAR as a means to improve consistency and accountability. When asked to recount how they became engaged in the FAR role, four of the five participants indicated they were asked directly by their chancellor or president and acknowledged they would have had a difficult time saying no to the highest ranking administrator at their institution. More research related to the appointment process of FARs at Division I FBS institutions is needed.
The relationship between the FAR and the chief executive officer is critical to the effectiveness of the FAR position. The participants in this study revealed they enjoyed the direct line of communication to the chief executive officer the FAR role provided them. Yet, four of the five participants indicated their position had little power or authority to make athletics-related decisions. The *FAR Handbook* (2012) states, “Faculty athletics representatives are as effective as their chief executive officers empower them to be, both in terms of the responsibilities assigned and the extent of institutional support provided” (p. 9). Further research is warranted on the relationship between FARs and their chief executive officers to determine if they are provided with the necessary authority and support to meet their role expectations.

This study’s findings complicate Gerdy’s (1992) assertion that the faculty voice is often not recognized as a credible source by athletic department representatives because they believe faculty have little grasp of the realities of big-time college athletics. While the participants acknowledged they are not consulted on many athletics-related decisions, all of the participants indicated they were well-versed in their knowledge and understanding of intercollegiate athletics. For Andrew, Calvin, and Emily, their previous experience as student-athletes helped inform their role as FAR. Wolverton’s (2010) findings suggest that many Division I FARs are not consulted on decisions involving athletics, mainly due to their perceived lack of credibility when it comes to athletics. The results of this study imply FARs are more knowledgeable about intercollegiate athletics than the current literature credits them. Further research related to FARs’ background experience and previous involvement with intercollegiate athletics is needed.

The findings substantiate Spivey’s (2008) suggestion that the pressure athletic directors and coaches have to win may affect their ability to make the best ethical decisions on behalf of the institutions they represent. Three of the FARs in this study reflected on incidents in which
unethical decisions made by either athletic directors or coaches led to scandals that created negative publicity for the institution. Further, three of the participants revealed they were disappointed by current student-athlete recruiting practices that lack any concern for academic integrity. The results of this study support Ridpath’s (2008) argument that, in the high stakes financial landscape of big-time college athletics, many Division I institutions are reluctant to adopt more stringent admission standards for student-athletes for fear they may be placed at a competitive disadvantage on the athletic fields. The findings advance the current literature focusing on the commercialism of intercollegiate athletics and the threat this poses to academic integrity. It is important for today’s university leaders to empower FARs with a strong voice in the governance and oversight of athletics in order to protect academic integrity.

Goals and Implications

The scholarly goal for this research was to gain a deeper insight into the current role and responsibilities of the FAR in the governance and oversight of athletics at Division I FBS institutions. The researcher sought to explore the effectiveness of the FAR role in the governance and oversight of athletics at Division I FBS institutions. The FAR is appointed to ensure academic integrity and institutional control of the athletics program. Extant scholarship on faculty involvement in the governance of athletics specifically focuses on the role faculty senates play in the governance process. Thus, the existing research has not captured the role FARs play in the governance and oversight of athletics. Therefore, this study brings awareness to the lived experiences of FARs and the challenges they encounter when attempting to become proactively involved in the athletics governance process. At a time when intercollegiate athletics is excessively commercialized, it is important to document the issues FARs face when attempting to protect their respective institutions from the negative impact of commercialism.
By examining the role of the FAR in governance of athletics, this research is intended to offer a deeper understanding of the institutional barriers FARs may encounter when attempting to become involved in matters pertaining to athletics. Intercollegiate athletics programs often serve as the “front porch” of higher education institutions; however, faculty, who are the cornerstone of life in higher education, play an undefined, and, in many cases, insignificant role in the governance of athletic programs. The larger scholarly goal was to examine and attempt to understand the essence of a lived phenomenon as experienced by FARs at Division I FBS institutions.

The practical goal for this study was to document the current state of FARs at institutions where athletics play a prominent role in campus life—Division I FBS institutions. The researcher also sought to gain a deeper understanding of the concerns faculty members have regarding the emphasis on athletics within the landscape of higher education. Finally, as the commercialism of Division I intercollegiate athletics continues to threaten the academic integrity of NCAA Division I member institutions, the researcher wanted to have a keen understanding of how the FAR protects the academic integrity of athletics programs at the institutional level.

**Implications for Practice**

This study revealed the role and responsibilities of the FAR vary across institutions. By examining the role and responsibilities of FARs at five different Division I FBS institutions, this study uncovered the chief executive officer sets the expectations for the FAR and determines the scope of power and responsibility. Further, the FARs who participated in this study indicated they were not formally evaluated on their performance as FAR. The findings suggest university administrators may want to consider implementing annual performance evaluations for FARs to ensure they are meeting the expectations and responsibilities as determined by the chief executive officer.
The job responsibilities of the FAR can be complex. Further, the role of the FAR within the organizational structure of an institution can be ambiguous. As a result, the transition period for new FARs can be lengthy. The FARs in this study shared the experience of enduring an arduous transition period, mainly stemming from the fact they had to learn the complexities of the FAR position while balancing their faculty duties. This study revealed it can take years before a FAR gains a true understanding of the role and responsibilities. Three of the participants had the opportunity to shadow the previous FAR prior to assuming the role, which they believed assisted in understanding some of the responsibilities that come with the position. The findings in this study imply transitioning to the FAR role involves a steep learning curve; therefore, all NCAA member institutions should consider implementing a shadow program to ease the adjustment process.

The results of this study, coupled with the extant literature, suggest the responsibilities of the FAR role can be very time consuming. A fear of time commitment is the primary reason faculty is reluctant to play a role in the athletics governance process (Kuga, 1996). Although only one of the FARs in this study reported receiving release time in return for serving as FAR, all of the participants supported the notion of a reduced teaching load to allow them to better focus on their FAR responsibilities. University administrators should consider providing FARs with release time from teaching, thus allowing them to dedicate sufficient time to the role that the responsibilities command.

This study provides a different lens to evaluate the role of the FAR and the challenges they encounter when attempting to protect the well-being of student-athletes and ensure both the academic integrity and institutional control of athletics programs. The findings support the existing literature that suggests FARs are often shut out from the athletic decision-making
process. Only one of the participants indicated he was involved in the admissions process for student-athletes. Rather than being accepted as the faculty voice in matters pertaining to athletics, many FARs are perceived as individuals who do not understand big-time athletics and are viewed as a hindrance by many athletic administrators and coaches. The findings suggest university administrators, specifically the chief executive officer, should empower FARs to have a strong voice in decisions involving athletics, as well as clearly communicate the importance of the FAR role to all stakeholders involved in the athletics governance process.

Based on the results of this study, student-athlete engagement is the most desirable attribute of the FAR role. For the participants, the opportunity to engage with student-athletes outside of the classroom was the most rewarding aspect of serving as the FAR. Further, they recognized protecting student-athlete welfare was a critical component of their position. The findings support the extant literature that posits faculty should be the primary guardians of academic integrity and the personal well-being of students. Athletic administrators would benefit by implementing an annual FAR “meet and greet” with student-athletes so they understand the role of the FAR and the resources the FAR can provide them.

At the institutional level, practitioners in higher education could benefit from strengthening the authority of FARs in the athletics governance process. The NCAA mandates each member institution appoint a FAR; however, it is up to the individual institution to define the responsibilities of the FAR at the local level. At a time when intercollegiate athletics are overwrought with commercialism that entices corruption, FARs could play an integral role in ensuring athletic programs are not compromising academic integrity for wins on the field of play. Moreover, Division I FBS institutions may benefit from establishing transparent
responsibilities for the FAR and clearly articulating the importance of the FAR to all stakeholders involved in athletics related matters.

**Implications for Research**

The extant literature on faculty governance of athletics fails to address the role of the FAR in institutional decisions involving athletics. The current study contributes to the literature on FAR governance of athletics and portends FARs are rarely consulted on athletics-related decisions. The participants in this study suggested they had little authority in making decisions that would positively impact the “student” side of the student-athlete. As FARs, they often felt dismissed when the time came to make athletics-related decisions that could impact the public perception of the institution. Future research should investigate the organizational dynamics of Division I FBS institutions to understand the barriers that may prevent FARs from having a strong voice in athletics-related decisions. This may also provide insight into the effectiveness of the current reporting hierarchy.

Additional research should be conducted on FAR involvement in the student-athlete admissions process as a means of understanding how they can strengthen their oversight of academic integrity. The current scholarship on faculty governance of athletics suggests institutions typically have lower admissions standards for student-athletes than for non-athletes. For the participants in this study, the institutional responsibility of protecting academic integrity was central to their role and supports Nichols et al. (2011) assertion that faculty oversight of intercollegiate athletics is vital to protecting the institutional mission. Thus, the findings suggest that further research focusing on the FARs role in the student-athlete admissions process is warranted.
Replicating this study with a different population of FARs at a wide variety of Division I FBS institutions would help contribute to the scholarly literature. All of the participants in this study were handpicked by their respective chief executive officers to serve as FAR. The findings suggest faculty may feel pressure to accept the FAR role when asked directly by the highest ranking administrator at their institution. Further research should be conducted to examine the FAR appointment process at various Division I FBS institutions. It would be beneficial to understand how the appointment process impacts the effectiveness of the FAR role. In addition, it would be important to understand the personal and profession attributes chief executive officers consider when appointing a FAR.

Future research should further explore FAR perceptions of their level of authority in the athletics governance process. The findings of this study suggest the FAR function is compliance-centric. Also, several of the participants expressed their desire to have a stronger voice in the governance of athletics. Further research could provide a better understanding of the relationship between FAR perceptions of authority and job satisfaction. It would be particularly interesting to examine how perceptions of role authority contribute to job performance.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current role of the FAR in the athletics governance process at NCAA Division I FBS institutions where intercollegiate athletics are an integral part of campus life. The analysis revealed three superordinate themes and nine subthemes that captured the essence of what it is like to serve in the role as FAR at a Division I FBS institution. The findings of the current study support the current literature indicating faculty plays an undefined, and often insignificant, role in the governance of athletics programs. The NCAA mandates each member institution appoint a FAR for the purposes of protecting student-athlete welfare and ensuring both the academic integrity and institutional control of athletics.
programs. The participants in this study enjoyed serving as the FAR but perceived their authority to be weak and their responsibilities compliance-laden.

This study suggests transitioning into the role of FAR can be challenging for faculty members. In many cases it can take a significant amount of time before a FAR feels comfortable in the position and truly comprehends the role and responsibilities. In addition, new FARs struggle to balance their extensive duties as full-time faculty members while attempting to simultaneously learn the nuances of the FAR position and fulfill role expectations. Furthermore, the FAR learning curve is perpetual as they must adapt to ever-changing NCAA rules and regulations.

Previous experience in athletics can serve as an asset for FARs when attempting to make sense of the position. FARs who were former student-athletes understand the need for a position that bridges academics and athletics. Additionally, FARs who have prior experience serving on athletics-related committees have a better understanding of how the position fits within the institutional governance structure.

Due to the drastic learning curve that comes with assuming the FAR position, shadow programs assist in easing the transition and also empower FARs with essential knowledge regarding NCAA policies and procedures. Further, the opportunity to shadow helps new FARs better understand role expectations. Finally, organizations, such as FARA, have taken proactive measures to communicate the effectiveness of shadow programs for new FARs.

FARs articulated the stress they endure by virtue of accepting the position. Although the level of stress varies, FARs indicated the amount of time they need to commit to the role creates a newfound quandary. Faculty members do not fully comprehend the amount of time they need to dedicate to fulfilling FAR job responsibilities until they are actively serving in the role. A
reduced teaching load can alleviate many of the time management challenges FARs face and allow them to focus more specifically on FAR duties. This information is valuable for university administrators not only to keep FARs happy, but also to use as an incentive to attract qualified faculty to the FAR position.

Despite some similarities with respect to their job descriptions, the role and responsibilities of FARs vary across institutions. The FARs in this study acknowledged most of their responsibilities center around NCAA compliance matters, which they do not perceive to be a favorable aspect of the position. FARs who are heavily invested and proactive in their role find it frustrating when they learn many FAR counterparts at peer institutions do not make the same level of investment. Variables such as conference affiliation, expectations of the chief executive officer, and involvement of the faculty senate in athletics governance contribute to the variation in FAR responsibilities across institutions.

The results of this study indicate FARs embrace their role due to their engagement with student-athletes. The FARs interviewed for this study felt it was their responsibility to protect the welfare of student-athletes and ensure they were equipped with the resources they needed to succeed as students. FARs understand and appreciate the level of commitment and dedication necessary for student-athletes to compete at the Division I level. FARs are committed to protecting the overall well-being of student-athletes, a level of investment that goes much deeper than simply monitoring academic progress rates. It is imperative for all student-athletes to be familiar with the FAR at their respective institution in the event they need assistance or support.

Chief executive officers need to analyze faculty background and accurately assess commitment level prior to appointing a FAR. Although the FARs in this study appreciated the direct line of communication to the chief executive officer, they admitted feeling pressure to
accept the position because they were asked by the highest ranking official at their institution. All higher education institutions should consider implementing an election process for the FAR as a means of ensuring the representative not only has the desire to serve in the role but also has peer support.

FARs describe themselves as liaisons between academics and athletics. Due to the nature of the position, FARs frequently interact with staff from the athletics department, including athletic administrators and coaches. In reflecting on their engagement with athletics staff, several participants reported they felt a level of dissention, which stemmed from the fact athletic administrators and coaches can perceive the academic focus of FARs to pose a threat to their athletics goals. Calvin’s acknowledgement that the athletics staff at his institution would eliminate the FAR role if not mandated by the NCAA provides further evidence of the philosophical divide that can exist between academics and athletics within the current higher education model. The findings in this study contribute to the current literature and support Knorr’s (2004) argument that the loosely coupled control structure prevalent in higher education institutions allows athletic departments to operate autonomously from academic administration.

It is pertinent for practitioners to understand athletic administrators and coaches often perceive the faculty voice to lack credibility and, therefore, do not want FARs consulted on decisions involving athletics. There is a current need to develop and implement programs aimed at creating a culture of trust between FARs and athletics department staff.

The opportunity to engage with student-athletes outside of the classroom environment is a rewarding experience for FARs. The findings in this study suggest FARs are respectful of the challenges student-athletes face when attempting to balance the commitment of being a full-time student while enduring the rigors inherent in competing at the highest level of intercollegiate
athletics. Protecting the welfare of student-athletes was a priority for the participants in this study; however, they indicated they did not have as much time as they would like to commit to student-athletes. This insight advances the notion of providing FARs at Division I FBS institutions with release time so they can commit the necessary time to the role that it demands.
References


Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

Dear Faculty Athletics Representative,

My name is Patrick Leary and I am currently a Doctor of Education student at Northeastern University and am conducting a study in collaboration with my Principal Investigator Dr. Kimberly Nolan, entitled *The Role of the Faculty Athletics Representative at National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I FBS Institutions.* I am currently seeking five faculty athletics representatives from Division I FBS institutions to participate in my study.

In this study, participants will be interviewed and asked questions regarding their role as a faculty athletics representative. Participants will be interviewed on three occasions. The preliminary interview will be conducted via Skype or GoToMeeting and last approximately 30 minutes. The second interview will be conducted via Skype or GoToMeeting and would last approximately 60 to 90 minutes. The third and final interview would be conducted via Skype or GoToMeeting and last approximately 30-45 minutes. All interviews will be recorded. The total time for participating in this study is less than three hours.

Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from this study at any time and for any reason.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me at leary.p@husky.neu.edu

Thank you for your consideration,

Patrick Leary
Appendix B: Consent to Participate

Northeastern University, Doctor of Education

Name of Investigator(s): Principal Investigator, Kimberly Nolan: Student Researcher, Patrick Leary

Title of Project: The Role of the Faculty Athletics Representative at NCAA Division I FBS Institutions

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

We are asking you to be in this study because you are a Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) at a NCAA Division I FBS institution.

The purpose of this research is to document the current state of FARs at Division I FBS institutions and their involvement in the governance of athletics.

If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you be interviewed regarding your role as a Faculty Athletics Representative. You will be interviewed on three occasions. The preliminary interview will be conducted remotely via Skype or GoToMeeting and last approximately 30 minutes. The second interview would be conducted via Skype or GoToMeeting and last approximately 60-90 minutes. The third and final interview would be conducted via Skype or GoToMeeting and last approximately 30-45 minutes. All interviews will be audio-recorded. The total time for participating in this study is less than three hours.

There are no foreseeable risks and/or discomforts associated with this study.

There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in the study. However, the information learned from this study may provide valuable feedback regarding a best-practice model for the role of an FAR at Division I FBS institutions.

Your part in this study will be confidential. Only the researchers on this study will see the information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way or any institution as being part of this project. All electronic data and interview transcripts from the study will be stored in a secure password-protected database located in the researcher’s home office to which only the researcher has access. In addition, the audio-recording device, interview tapes, transcriptions, laptop computer used to transcribe the data, and hand-written interview notes will be secured in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home office. The researcher will further safeguard your anonymity by asking you to member check the
transcriptions and approve your assigned alias. Finally, upon completion of the study the researcher will destroy all data in an appropriate manner to further ensure your confidentiality.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time and for any reason.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Patrick Leary at leary.p@husky.neu.edu, the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Kimberly Nolan, the Principal Investigator, at k.nolan@neu.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

If you agree to participate in this research please sign this form, scan the signed document, and email it to leary.p@husky.neu.edu.

I agree to take part in this research.

____________________________________________  ______________________
Signature of person agreeing to take part        Date

____________________________________________
Printed name of person above

____________________________________________  ______________________
Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent        Date

____________________________________________
Printed name of person above
Appendix C: IRB Approval

Northeastern

NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION

Date: November 27, 2013
IRB #: CPS13-11-01

Principal Investigator(s): Kimberly Nolan
Patrick Leary

Department: Doctor of Education Program
College of Professional Studies

Address: 20 Belvidere
Northeastern University

Title of Project: The Role of the Faculty Athletics Representative at NCAA
Division I FBS Institutions

Participating Sites: N/A

DHHS Review Category: Expedited #6, #7

Informed Consents: One (1) signed consent form

Monitoring Interval: 12 months

APPROVAL EXPIRATION DATE: NOVEMBER 26, 2014

Investigator's Responsibilities:

1. The informed consent form bearing the IRB approval stamp must be used when
recruiting participants into the study.
2. The investigator must notify IRB immediately of unexpected adverse reactions, or new
information that may alter our perception of the benefit-risk ratio.
3. Study procedures and files are subject to audit any time.
4. Any modifications of the protocol or the informed consent as the study progresses must
be reviewed and approved by this committee prior to being instituted.
5. Continuing Review Approval for the proposal should be requested at least one month
prior to the expiration date above.
6. This approval applies to the protection of human subjects only. It does not apply to any
other university approvals that may be necessary.

C. Randall Colvin, Ph.D., Chair
Northeastern University Institutional Review Board

Nan C. Regina, Director
Human Subject Research Protection

Northeastern University FWA #4630
Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol for First Interview

Topic: The Role of the Faculty Athletics Representative at NCAA Division I FBS Institutions

Time of interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewer:
Interviewee #:
Position of Interviewee #:
(Turn on recorder)

Introduction/Description of Project

(a) Interviewer/Interviewee Introductions
(b) Provide an approximation of how long the interview will take
(c) Explanation of the purpose of the study
(d) Explanation of the sources of data being collected
(e) Explanation of what will be done with the data to protect the confidentiality of the participant

Thank the individual for their cooperation and participation in this interview. Assure them of the confidentiality of the responses and schedule a date and time for the second interview.
Interview Protocol for Second Interview

Topic: The Role of the Faculty Athletics Representative at NCAA Division I FBS Institutions

Time of interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewer:
Interviewee #:
Position of Interviewee #:
(Turn on recorder)

Introduction

(f) Provide an approximation of how long the interview will take

Interview Questions

- Can you tell me what you do as FAR?
- How would you describe your experience as FAR to someone who works outside the university?
- Tell me about your experiences as FAR?

Additional Follow Up Questions/Topics to be covered during interview

- How did you become engaged in the position?
- How long have you held the position of FAR?
- How was year one as FAR versus current day?
- How was the position of FAR described to you?
- How are you evaluated in this position?
- Can you talk to me about how this job fits into your work at the institution?
- Can you tell me about your involvement in the selection criteria of student-athletes?

Prompts to be used during interview

- Can you tell me more about that?
- Can you provide an example?
- Can you provide any documentation I can take with me?

Thank the individual for their cooperation and participation in this interview. Assure them of the confidentiality of the responses and inform the individual the interviewer will send an email to schedule the third and final interview.
Interview Protocol for Third Interview

Topic: The Role of the Faculty Athletics Representative at NCAA Division I FBS Institutions

Time of interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewer:
Interviewee #:
Position of Interviewee #:
(Turn on recorder)

Introduction

(g) Provide an approximation of how long the interview will take
(h) Provide an explanation that the purpose of this interview is for member checking

Interview Questions

- Can you tell me if the findings of this report are accurate?
- Can you tell me if the interpretations are fair and representative?

Thank the individual for their cooperation and participation in the research.