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# **A New Game Plan: Adopting an Integrated European Club Sports System in the United States can save American Intercollegiate Athletics**

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## **Abstract**

### **1. AIM OF ABSTRACT**

Intercollegiate sport is a uniquely American phenomenon. It is different from most countries in that the main sport development model in America is via the educational system. In Europe and other countries it is mostly done in academies and professional sport clubs that are distinct and separate from the educational institutions. Currently it can be argued that American intercollegiate athletics in moving further away from a hybrid educational component to an athletics first culture based on commercialism and revenue generation. While the American sports connection to the educational system is unique, it is one that is likely to change in the near future due to a burgeoning athletes rights movement and attacks on many other fronts through major lawsuits challenging the NCAA's concept of amateurism and American university sport forever. The change can be so dramatic that there needs to be models that are at least developed conceptually that can be ready to replace, augment, or even enhance the current system

### **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND/LITERATURE REVIEW**

Few issues in sports have captivated Americans as much as intercollegiate athletics. Intercollegiate athletics in the USA has been the subject of significant concern and empirical inquiry for over 100 years (Adler & Adler, 1985; Grimes & Chressanths, 1994; Hanford, 1979; Pascarella, Bohr, Nora & Terenzini, 1995; Ridpath, 2002; 2005; Savage, 1929). Millions of fans attend games between students who provide fans with entertainment while helping bind together communities. Proponents point to other benefits such as enhancing a school's visibility on a national level and providing opportunities for athletes to develop leadership, teamwork and other traits. (Vedder, Villwock & Denhart, 2009). Some critics argue that coaches and sports administrators denigrate academics and overemphasize the importance of sports. The

debates about intercollegiate athletics have been growing for over a century and seem to be exacerbated by an inability to fully quantify its costs and benefits within an educational model (Vedder, Villwock & Denhart, 2009). The researcher intends to develop theoretical constructs during analysis using the grounded theory as a model.

### 3. METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA ANALYSIS

This is a mixed methods qualitative and quantitative study that analyzes the American Intercollegiate athletic system and compares and contrasts it with the European Club Sports model for sport development. The main outcome is to review, analyze, and develop a new model(s) for American sport development using the European Club sports system as a potential template. This can include proposing a complete dismantling of the current system and changing to a club model, or developing a hybrid model while keeping some of the current underpinnings of the American intercollegiate athletic system, or proposing two separate and distinct systems within the current American sports climate. Data will be obtained through qualitative interviews with key individuals in both systems, quantitative surveys, and existing historical research and secondary data. Specifically the goals of this project are to answer several specific research questions including:

1. Can a European Club Sports Model exist independently of the current United States intercollegiate athletic model to provide other options for player development and growth for professional sports programs, the Olympics, and World Championships?
  2. Can a hybrid model of European style club sports systems work in conjunction with the current US intercollegiate athletic model to provide options, including higher education, options for player development and growth for professional sports programs, the Olympics, World Championships?
  3. Can a proposed European club sports model, existing as an outsourced independent association but under the name of the university replace the current system of intercollegiate athletics governance in the US for high level player development for leagues and competition?
- #### 4. RESULTS, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS/CONCLUSIONS (In progress)

Within all four of these questions are many details that must be analyzed to ascertain and propose what model might work best and why with justification and reasoning how the structure could be organizationally and financially sustainable while generating fan interest along with ticket, sponsorship, and media revenue. Most important is developing alternative models for sports development within or outside the current intercollegiate athletics system in the US. Currently the researcher is analyzing the US model, conducting interviews, and data collection. The same will happen in Europe beginning in June 2014 with preliminary results ready for presentation at EASM 2014.

### References

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