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### Recruiting Process: The Decision is Now

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## Recruiting Process: The Decision is Now

### Abstract

The college athletic recruiting process is one cluttered with many different factors. Studies have analyzed institutional and social factors impacting a prospective student-athletes' recruitment process. However, little research has explored recruiting from an athlete's perspective on how they make their college decision. This study aimed to investigate the most influential factors in a Division III student-athlete's college decision based on the college recruiting process. The purpose of conducting this research is to highlight and identify the factors that student athletes consider in regards to their recruiting process, and the school they later choose to attend and continue their athletic careers. A survey was administered to all student-athletes on the St. John Fisher College campus in hopes of maximizing responses and acquiring data in order to justify my research question. It was discovered that academics was the most influential factor group. It's important to identify these factors at the athletic department of the Division III level to help members gain extensive knowledge and a greater focus on specific recruiting for these prospective student athletes.

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**Recruiting Process: The Decision is Now**

Joshua Michels

St. John Fisher College

### **Abstract**

The college athletic recruiting process is one cluttered with many different factors. Studies have analyzed institutional and social factors impacting a prospective student-athletes' recruitment process. However, little research has explored recruiting from an athlete's perspective on how they make their college decision. This study aimed to investigate the most influential factors in a Division III student-athlete's college decision based on the college recruiting process. The purpose of conducting this research is to highlight and identify the factors that student athletes consider in regards to their recruiting process, and the school they later choose to attend and continue their athletic careers. A survey was administered to all student-athletes on the St. John Fisher College campus in hopes of maximizing responses and acquiring data in order to justify my research question. It was discovered that academics was the most influential factor group. It's important to identify these factors at the athletic department of the Division III level to help members gain extensive knowledge and a greater focus on specific recruiting for these prospective student athletes.

### **Recruiting Process: The Decision is Now**

Decisions, Decisions and Decisions.... they tend to be overwhelming and frustration to deal with. Never knowing what the best possible choice is to make, leading one to overthink in certain difficult situations. Where to go to college is a very difficult decision for many high school students to face. This choice becomes much more challenging for those students who also wish to play a sport in college. Student-athletes face numerous different things within the recruiting process. This demonstrates why the recruiting process is described to be such a challenging process for many. The recruiting process involves the need for the prospective student athlete to make a decision based on the influential factors the individual came upon throughout the process. Student-athletes must take everything into consideration, and weigh the pros and cons to each potential school. The recruiting process can be overwhelming and stressful at times, but also exciting to be able to see all of the coaches showing interest in someone of their athletic ability. It all comes down to what the most important factor ultimately is when making a decision on what school to attend, and continue an athletic career at.

Coaches and recruits are engaging in a competitive marketplace throughout the entire recruiting process. Student-athletes will prioritize different school based on their attributes, sport factors, as well as be impacted by many different people during the decision making process. The purpose of conducting this research is to highlight and identify the factors that student athletes consider throughout their recruiting process. Both coaches and recruits are highly involved within this process. They both try to identify key components that will allow them to get what they want at the end of the day, but this could prove to be problematic since both the coach and recruit may have different wants and needs. This process allows them to interact and

discover how they each can benefit from one another when it comes down to the ultimate decision.

In the sports world today there are certain aspects within the industry that are overlooked at times. A main aspect that is overlooked at times is in fact the recruiting process. Sport enthusiasts realize that the coaches and recruits engage in a competitive marketplace during the recruiting process, but fans rarely take the time to consider what the process actually entails. College recruiting is a process where coaches identify potential recruits, evaluate them and ultimately decide on the offers they are going to make. The ability to recruit talented student-athletes is one of the most important contributing factors to a successful athletic department (Chard & Potwarka, 2017). The competition between athletic departments and schools to recruit student-athletes is often as fierce as the actual contest between the athletic teams.

## **Literature Review**

### **Recruiting Regulations and Processes**

Student athletes that are looking to continue their careers at the collegiate level have to go through a process called recruiting. Many student athletes are not aware of how this process works and the rules involved that need to be followed (Bricker & Hanson 2013). The recruiting process is initiated when a college coach first starts to contact a high school student-athlete to play sports at their college (Berkman, 2015). High school athletes may begin being recruited as early as sophomores, but the majority of recruiting begins when individuals are rising juniors, or during the fall of their senior year of high school (Berkman, 2015). Recruiting for an entering freshman class begins early the previous year. “Contact between a college coach and a high

school student athlete is regulated and kept to a minimum for much of the process" (Bricker & Hanson, 2013, p. 32). This is due to the specific rules that are set in place. These rules state what can be said and done as it pertains to communication among the college coach and high school student athlete throughout this process.

Throughout the recruiting process for athletes interested in playing for a NCAA affiliated school, there are a series of regulations that a recruit and coach must follow in order to proceed within this process. The NCAA bylaws state that "prior to NSD [National Signing Day], contact with recruits is limited to one phone call per week outside of scheduled campus and in home visits, which can take place only during a certain period" (Bricker & Hanson, 2013, p.32). "Football coaches may view a recruit's high school practice and games only during limited time window" (Bricker & Hanson, 2013, p.36). When it comes to the recruiting process, coaches can initially identify talent by looking at rankings provided by recruiting evaluation services, and by reviewing video highlights submitted by athletes (Soltis, et al, 2010). Coaches will then reach out to the recruit stating their interest in them, but this must be done when the time is considered acceptable throughout the process. "The recruiting of college athletes may be more competitive than the actual sports they may play. The race for talent has caused coaches to recruit much more aggressively" (Richardson & Gabbin, 2016, p. 46). Coaches tend to be aggressive with recruits. As coaches are worried about losing a top recruit to another school, they may inflate their comments towards these top recruits. These coaches will be more grandiose in their declaration of interest as a way to hopefully persuade an athlete to sign with them. This is why recruits will oftentimes believe them in regards to what they said (Porto, 2014). Coaches tend to tell these

recruits what they believe they want to hear, and over exaggerate, but this results in the truth not being told.

The coaches are very smart when it comes to talking to their recruits in regards to discussing and describing the campus and it's amenities, as well as other facilities offered. The hopes are that this will result in making their institution appear to be more appealing than other institutions the student-athlete may be considering (Porto, 2014). Identifying top recruits is the easy part for coaches when looking for players for their future team within the recruiting process (Bricker & Hanson, 2013). In terms of getting information out of recruits is the difficult part. Coaches try to get information out of recruits in order to figure out the interests they have in the school, where they may stand with the other schools lined up, and lastly trying to figure out what else they can do for them in order to secure their commitment to their school (Porto, 2014). Despite both being engaged in the same recruiting process, coaches and athletes have different priorities, which can shape the progression of the recruiting timeline.

### **Coaching Priorities**

Every single college or university is comprised of different types of coaches. Each of these coaches have their own priorities and plans when targeting recruits (Wattie, 2015). There are coaches that attempt to get in the recruiting process early, some like to develop relationships with their recruits, and others are mainly focusing on selling their program and getting as many recruits as they can to attend their school.

Coaches make it a priority to “get in early” with a recruit in order to convey a sense of importance compared to other recruits being looked at (Fee, Hadlock & Pierce, 2006). “As The New York Times has reported, college coaches are contacting potential recruits at younger ages



than they have before. And some athletes are receiving Division I scholarship offers before they even start the eighth grade” (Fee, Hadlock & Pierce, 2006). These coaches are trying to get the attention of these student athletes early within the process. This leads to forgoing the work to build a true relationship with the player in order to just get these recruits/players before other schools do. This demonstrates the different types of coaches that exist, and the methods that certain coaches use to approach recruits within the recruiting process.

The coach-athlete relationship is a critical factor in the school selection process, which makes it important within the recruiting process. Attempting to start this relationship can be overwhelming in the beginning of recruiting, especially when reaching out to younger age kids who haven't even started 8th grade yet. Some coaches are looking to build and maintain a genuine relationship on and off the field (Wattie, 2015). Another set of coaches reach out to student-athletes and build a relationship with them, not because that is their natural coaching style or personality, but because this is what they believe is a key part within the recruiting process (Soltis, et al, 2010). Research shows that the stronger the relationship is between the coach and the recruit, the more likely the recruit will attend their school (Wattie, 2015).

In the recruiting process it's important to obtain a relationship between the coach and the athlete (Wattie, 2015). During the recruiting process the coaches work to develop relationships with recruits. Common methods of communication would be by sending them text messages, mail, or email whenever the NCAA allows it (Massey, 2013). “The communication from the coaches perspective shows they are interested in the recruit on how they want the recruit to be apart of their team, could be as simple as, “How are your classes? Can we help you in any way? I'll be back on campus in October” (Richardson & Gabbin, 2016, p. 7). These are common

messages of communication sent from the recruiting coach to the athlete. If the coaches show that they care about the recruit rather than just trying to recruit them to play for their team, it will usually benefit both the coach and the athlete. This usually leads to helping make the recruits decision that much easier because of the level of empathy expressed on the coaches part toward the athlete.

There are coaches at the Division III level that look to engage with recruits, and others who do not care to engage in building a relationship with their recruits. Coaches who do not build relationships with their recruits look to sell their program instead. Obtaining their job as a coach is their primary focus, and this is why they will do anything possible to secure their job. Coaches will go out their way to get these players to come to their college. During visits coaches will try to show off their locker room, and other facilities. It also is likely that they will try to bring the recruit to an event that may be going on at campus to show the type of environment the specific school is like (Wattie, 2015). This is where the lack of communication between the recruit and coach may come into play. Coaches may say what the recruit wants to hear, rather than what they should say as a coach during the recruiting process (Porto, 2014). As a coach, they tend to talk about how wonderful their facilities are, and how successful their program may be (Porto, 2014). This is all about selling their program and attempting to make it sound or appear to be appealing to other considering it. Coaches that tend to focus on selling their program tend to overlook all of the other aspects of the recruiting process that the recruit may value and consider. Coaches do not necessarily tell the recruits everything they would like to hear, or they tell them false information on their visits. “There is a perception for many student athletes that intercollegiate athletics is merely a stepping-stone to their professional careers,

some institutions foster this belief and use the dreams of young native student athletes to take advantage of them when on a recruit visit (Castle, 2010, p. 60). Many young potential recruits have big dreams. They all have such a love for their sport that they can never imagine letting it go, and never playing again. But, in reality not all student athletes are going to continue on and play professionally.

### **Recruit's Considerations**

Recruits have a lot to take into consideration during the recruiting process before ultimately making a decision on what school to attend. There are three main considerations that recruits look into when going through the recruit process. These considerations are sports, academics, and family (Chard & Potwarka, 2017). A recruit's sport consideration is what they look for as a whole within the sport team they are thinking of joining. Recruits can be described as being very competitive, meaning they look to win at all costs based on the goal they've set for themselves. Recruits also may look into how they can grow as an athlete to potentially further benefit their careers (Castle, 2010).

Athletes may perceive their athletic careers as barriers to their academic pursuits (Castle, 2010). This may lead some recruits to bypass the academic side of things when being recruited, while others take academics into strong consideration during this process. Academics can be a very influential factor for a recruit deciding which school to attend (Soltis, et al, 2010). "The most important factor that influences a recruit's decision include the total academic value of the college's degrees" (Pitts, & Evans, 2016, page 63). There are a wide variety of majors within a school for recruits to select from. If the recruit is unsure going into college on what major they would like to select, it impacts whether or not they'll continue interest in that school (Castle,

2010). Despite the fact that sports may be a main goal for some athletes, others really care about school and their academics. It must be kept in mind that this is college, and school and academics should come before the sport one is playing.

When recruits are looking at the academic side of things, they look to make sure they have the right support services offered that are necessary for their needs. These services vary from having the major they may be interested in, the right academic support system, and how the professors can be beneficial in working with them academically, as they balance school and the specific sport (Castle, 2010). These recruits look to further benefit their academic careers as well, taking into consideration that many of these recruits may be aware that their athletic careers could end at some point throughout the course of their life (Castle, 2010). This is an important factor to consider, because unfortunate injuries can occur prior to graduation that can end the athletic career, which then places a greater focus on academics. Some student athletes may eventually grow to not like the sport as much as they originally did, and choose to quit. Another possibility is that they may struggle to balance academics alongside the sport, and therefore choose to stop playing for their academics sake. For some recruits the availability of support services is a factor they consider, because they may need such services offered in order to fully maximize their academic career.

The last consideration that a recruit may look at is family. From a young age, family members play a very instrumental role in introducing children to sports (Magnusen, Kim, Perrewé, & Ferris, 2014). As a student athlete grows within their sport throughout high school, parents continue involvement as it pertains to their child's decision relating to sports like they did when they were kids (Magnusen, Kim, Perrewé, & Ferris, 2014). This family influence will

continue as children start the college selection process as prospective NCAA student-athlete (Magnusen, Kim, Perrewé, & Ferris, 2014). The family system theory is a theoretical approach that accounts for the social interactions in a family relating to sport socialization (Schaeperkoetter, Bass & Gordon, 2015). Family system theory takes into account the role members both within and external to the family can have on behavioral decisions made by one or more family members (Schaeperkoetter, Bass & Gordon, 2015). This demonstrates that the parents of the student-athlete impact the family structure based on the college decision-making process. The recruits family may look out for them at times and also may not. Some parents aren't actually looking out for their child's long term best interests. Parent oftentimes try to point out the things that aren't in the best interest for their son or daughter. Parents tend to steer their child in one direction or another in regards to where their child should attend. When in reality parents should be allowing their child to pick the school by themselves without any outside factors creeping in and interfering. It is important that the student-athlete picks the school that they personally believe is the best fit for them as a student and athlete altogether.

### **Purpose Statement**

The recruiting process is a route for those who are trying to continue their athletic career at the next level. Along the way there are certain factors that come into play. Coaches can have an impact as well on the recruit's decision making process and the school they ultimately choose to select. On the other hand parents have an impact on what they say to their kids, in effect expressing their own personal opinion on where they think their child should go to school. Many kids respect the opinion of their parents, and highly take it into consideration. School factors can vary from major, professors, school size, tuition cost and other factors that a recruit tends to

value or believe is best for them. Ultimately, the recruit has to come up with a decision and select a school they will be attending on their own. The purpose of this research paper is to investigate the topic of recruiting student athletes in high school to determine the most influential factor for these recruits on why they end up committing to a Division III school. Also identifying what relationships exist between various aspects of a recruiting process, and a recruit's overall satisfaction with the process. This research will provide recruits with more of a intensive knowledge when it comes to the recruiting process.

## **Method**

### **General Research Descriptors**

The focus of this project was to gain information from recruits during their recruiting processes in a Division III environment. This research was exploratory because it attempted to gain information from an under researched population, Division III athletes (Jones, 2015). Research has already established many of the elements of Division I recruiting (Castle, 2010), but it is unclear what is happening at a non-scholarship level. The research will further be classified as exploratory as it attempted to uncover how the recruiting process happened for a student-athlete, and why certain elements within that process became the most important decision factor for them (Jones, 2015). The research can also be classified as post-positivist due to the fact there will be a chance to replicate majority of the research process and to identify trends, or generalizations that are common within this paper. This project further falls under this research classification as it can be expected that despite being replicated in a different environment, similar outcomes are expected (Jones, 2015).

### **Sample Selection**

The participants for this research were recruits that got recruited to play some type of sport in college. These recruits came from St. John Fisher College, a Division III school. Any athlete, regardless of sport participated was eligible to participate. Within this sample selection there was information collected by 130 student-athletes for this data. This was done to ensure there was enough valid information for the statistics, in order to draw conclusions within the research question. Reaching this number of participants allowed the survey to indicate a particular number needed in order to not violate statistical assumptions that underlie the test conducted.

### **Variables and Measurements**

There were many variables that needed to be taken into consideration when collecting the data. Throughout the course of this paper the term recruits will be defined as prospective student athletes looking to further pursue their career athletically at the next level. Other variables were collected were the recruit's background, recruiting visit, and the factors that play a role in the decision during the recruiting process. To assess the recruits background, information on the size of the high school, distance to St. John Fisher College from home, specific sport they play, and gender of the recruit were included as possible important variables. The size of the high school was compared to the size of the college they ultimately chose to attend, and was compared on if the size matched or not. This would prove if size of the school played a role in their decision. This was also used as a comparison variable to see if recruits from different sized high schools had different recruiting experiences. Distance was looked into to discover if it had an impact on the recruits decision, possibly because they wished to stay closer to home, or to potentially get away from home as well. The sport they played impacted their recruiting process, due to the fact

that the number of people being recruited for that sport, or how big the team is could have altered how many athletes were recruited.

During the recruiting visit multiple things happen. The survey attempted to understand many of these events including the importance of what happened throughout the recruits visit, how they interacted with future teammates, their impressions of the athletic facilities, and the interpretation of coach's interest of the recruit. Analyzing the recruiting visit and discussing what happened throughout the course of their visit allowed these recruits to share what they liked and disliked during the visit. Collecting thoughts about interactions with future teammates proved to be important as it may have shaped their decision based on who they chose to play for for the next four years. Previous research has shown that athletic facilities shape decision of recruits, therefore it was important to gather that information as well (Wattie, 2015).

The last variable that was measured was the factors that played a role in the decision the recruit had to make. This variable was able to be broken down into three subcategories, the academic factors, sports factors and the social/family factor. The academic factor contains the overall thoughts on how the recruit liked the school. Liking the school was impacted on if the recruit had a wide variety of majors to select from, and whether the recruit had the support services they needed to further benefit their education within that school. The sports factors involved the success of the team/history of their program, whether or not the recruit would get playing time, and how they would grow as an athlete in that specific athlete program offered at the school in mention. The social/family factor discussed the pressure that people close to you may have put on you when making a decision. The distance factor pertained to whether you were



able to be away from home and your family and friends at college, which had a significant impact on the schools the recruits ended up choosing.

All of these variables, the recruits background, the recruits visit, and the factors that play a role in the decision were all measured in nominal scales. The independent variable for this research was the factors behind the choice of the school the recruit selected, while the dependent variable within this research was how the factors shape the recruits choice within the platform of the school they had a preference on.

### **Data Collection Instrument**

Information regarding the students was collected through Qualtrics. This site was used to make a survey to see what factors impacted them during their recruiting process. This survey consisted of 22 questions. All questions were multiple choice, and asked students to answer based on their personal recruiting experiences. The survey was broken down into 3 categories. The categories were background of the athlete, the experiences during the recruiting process, and lastly their reflection of the overall recruiting process as a whole. The type of questions this surveyed contained were descriptive text, multiple choice, rank order, slider, and side by side. Before taking the actual survey there was an ethical treatment statement that was given out to the participants. The ethical treatment statement exist to make sure I had their full consent and permission to use their data. This survey displayed a multitude of questions trying to figure out the area in which they are from, what sport(s) they play, what factors lead to deciding a school, and how many schools were recruiting these students. All of these questions narrowed down and identified the factor being the most influential to the student athlete. The questions asked to the recruits were quantitative and qualitative. An example of a quantitative question that was used in

the survey was “how many schools were you recruited by? An example of a qualitative question that was used in the survey was “ What was it like to go through the recruiting process; was it a positive or negative experience for you?”

### **Data Collection Procedure**

After the survey was drafted, a pilot test was conducted to identify whether or not there were any errors within the collection of the data. Establishing research protocols minimized any possible errors occurring and maximized the response rate (Jones, 2015). After following this procedure, collecting the proper data allowed me to see what questions were useful or not to figure out the research question. The pilot test was distributed on October 19th, and was open for 3 weeks, later being closed on November 9th. During the course of the time the survey was distributed twice to undergraduate students to explain what this survey was about through the cover letter (see Appendix B). Also with the cover letter there was a follow up letter to kindly remind students to take the survey if they have not already taken it when it was first released (see Appendix C). After all these participants finished the survey, the data collected from it was collected and put into SPSS software. SPSS software was where the information was analyzed based on the correlations, frequencies, and other types of information used to examine the research questions.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

All responses were downloaded from Qualtrics into Excel for initial exploration prior to being entered into the SPSS software. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to summarize and analyze the data. Within this survey, the data that was mainly focused on was the multitude of variables regarding how SPSS software analyzed the correlations and frequencies of

them. Some of the variables that were examined were large sport teams v.s small sports teams, and the reflection of the overall impression for each one of these teams throughout their recruiting process. Numbers demonstrated the impact the size of the team had on the overall rating based on the recruiting process, because a student reflects their experience as good or bad when rating it. Another variables that was analyzed was the success of the overall recruiting process based on the experience in general, and how the individual involved was treated during the process. Numbers show whether you were treated fairly, special, or lied to proved to impact the success of the individuals recruiting process as a whole. These two variables were the primary focus when analyzing the relationship, prediction, and differences when identifying the correlations and regressions of the test.

### **Results**

Through the use of Qualtrics, regressions, correlations, and chi-squared test the researcher was able to gain access to the results from the data collected in order to answer the research questions. The research questions for this paper were: What are the most influential factors for these recruits in terms of why they end up selecting their preferred DIII school? What relationships exist between various aspects of a recruiting process, and a recruits overall satisfaction with the process? Based on the results taken from these research question, there was more light shed on the reasons why a student-athlete decides to attend a Division III school over another. These results identified the most influential factor that student-athlete valued the most throughout the course of their recruiting process. When analyzing the data, there were some general descriptive statistics that can be taken from the data that was collected. There were numerous reasons why a student athlete decided to attend a school. First, within the survey was

how far people live away from the school. The results from the survey showed that 33% of people live from an hour to two hours away from campus. Approximately 23% live two hours to four hours away from the school. These numbers demonstrate the impact distance from home had on students, with many trying to stay within a four hour radius of home when choosing a school to attend. After identifying the distance of the school to the recruits home, the survey then focused on class size. The average students graduation class was comprised of 258 students. This proved that these students preferred a small campus environment, most likely because that's what they are used to and feel comfortable with based on the school they graduated high school from. Majority of student athletes on campus were recruited to play one sport, with approximately 70% of them stating they got recruited to play just one sport. On the other hand approximately 25% of students were recruited to play two sports. Out of all of these students, 88% of them were not transfer students. This drastic result portrays that these student athletes went through the process and stuck with their decision, and did not second guess themselves on whether they made the right decision. They chose to stick with the schools they originally chose, and did not transfer to other schools.

Respondents experienced a variety of things during their recruiting process. Ranging from the number of schools they were recruited by, the actual number of visits at high school or a neutral site, number of times the coach called or texted, and even the number of overnight and day visits taken by the recruit. All of these factors (see Table 1) display the minimum, maximum, and average number of occurrences of the following questions. This displays the total number of inquiries that occurred throughout their recruiting visit. Numbers show that 4-5 schools on average visited each student athlete at their home school. When discussing number of calls, text

messages, and visits taken by the recruit they happened to be roughly similar to the average number of times the school visited them. Based on the occurrences of activities during the recruiting period, the survey looked further into the interactions of the recruiting visit. This examines the satisfaction level of the recruits interaction with the coaches, players, professors and other school or athletic employees. The survey also looked into how the recruit felt throughout the course of the recruiting process as well. The specific feelings that were tested through the survey were feeling knowledgeable, excited, nervous, prepared, and comfortable during the recruiting process. (see Table 2). Studies show that professors had the most influence on a student as a stakeholder on campus. Also, majority of the students stated they felt as though they were prepared for the recruiting process as a whole. There was a mean of 3.37 of students feeling prepared during the recruiting process (see Table 2).

The next part of the survey combined 3 questions into a table ranking the order of questions into three different categories. The categories of these questions were broken down into factors impacting school choice, athletic facilities, and most influential factor that impacted the final school choice. Studies displayed that the most impactful athletic facility was the game location (fields, gym, etc). Game locations had a mean of 1.65 (see Table 3). Looking into the category of ranking the influential school aspects, availability of the individuals anticipated major was the most influential. The mean of availability of the major was 1.83 (see Table 3). Studies throughout the course of this paper explain how the major is quite influential, especially at the Division III level when comparing it to Division I schools (Magnusen, Kim, Perrewé, & Ferris, 2014). The final category was the final school decision. This was a combination of the

first two categories in an effort to figure out what factor stood out from the rest. The most influential factor in this category was the availability of major yet again (see Table 3).

Towards the end of the survey, after identifying majority of the factors influencing the recruits, I then examined the respondents evaluation of the overall recruiting process regarding how they felt. There were four areas I wanted to evaluate, and these were if they were treated fairly, given special treatment, dealt with honestly, or even potentially lied too. Numbers show that these student-athletes were treated fairly. (see Table 4) Following behind being treated fairly, these athletes also felt like they were treated honestly. These were the two factors that impacted student-athletes the most, and how the individual potentially being lied to did not prove to be a significant factor during their recruiting process. The last part of the survey combined a couple questions to make a table that displayed the stakeholders on campus, and the interactions student athletes had with them. Also the feelings about the recruiting process, and the perception of treatment during the recruiting process were also looked into. All of these aspects were touched on briefly, but other aspects that had a bigger impact were the overall rating of the college choice, and the overall success of the recruiting process. This study shows that professors had the most influential factor based on the interactions these student-athletes had on campus. This interaction the student athletes had with professors, the overall success of the recruiting process, and overall rating of the college choice was a direct result of having a successful recruit process decision (see Table 5).

When discussing the recruits feelings prior to the recruiting process, there proved to be a common theme that occurred. Majority of student athletes stated that they felt comfortable, excited and prepared as their top three aspect relating to their overall feelings throughout the

process (see Table 5). Finally, the last section of this table focused on the recruits perception of treatment during the process. Studies show that these student athletes felt that they were dealt with honestly and fairly during the recruiting process, which in effect was highly valued and impacted their final decision. This demonstrates that here at St. John Fisher the coaches were straight forward when speaking to the recruits on why they felt the recruit would be a good fit within their program. Potentially being lied to was not a factor that had any impact on the student athletes decision (see Table 5). An overall over look of this table depicts the certain aspects that impacted the student athlete greatly on their overall rating of their college choice, and the overall success of the recruiting process, which proved to have had direct impact to their success.

### **Discussion**

The results and findings from the data collected by the researcher helped to shed new light to investigate the topic of recruiting student athletes in high school, and the profession of the recruiting process. After creating these two research questions: What is the most influential factor for these recruits on why they end up committing to a Division III school. It also identifies what relationships exist between various aspects of a recruiting process and a recruits overall satisfaction with the process. The primary purpose of this study was to examine the factors of the recruiting process on how the recruits used certain factors to make a decision on what school best fit their desired needs. The recruiting process was broken down into three categories; the recruiting regulations and processes, coaching priorities, and the recruits considerations. Each section shows the benefits of the recruiting process on how recruits gained extensive knowledge on how to go about the process, especially when having to take every factor into consideration and weigh the pros and cons (Bricker & Hanson, 2013, p.36). Still, other studies clearly warned

recruits that the coaches may act a certain way with them, which could lead to an improper and inaccurate first impression of the coach (Porto, 2014). Coaches are willing to do whatever it takes at times to get recruits to come to their school. Recruits need to identify what is beneficial for them when making the ultimate decision. Our results revealed no significant difference in the mean average of the participants which play sports rather than those who no longer play sports, but were originally recruited. Based on the amount of participants that took this survey, they valued certain a main factor which was academics. This was a valuable factor for them throughout the course of their recruiting process, and was the main influential factor overall for a Division III recruit. Based on this information, a Division III School has various factors that are influential for these student athletes that differ for the factors that are important for a Division I recruit. Aside from the academic standpoint, most recruits felt well prepared and excited going into the process. Numbers show that there was a mean of 3.37 of students feeling prepared and a mean of 4.40 of students feeling excited (see Table 3). This demonstrates recruits going into the recruiting process confidently and excited to see what awaits them in regards to their future of continuing to play their most beloved sport at a collegiate level. These recruits felt this way due to the number of schools in contact with them (see Table 1). These numbers showed that the average of schools a student was in contact with was 4-5 schools. The more schools that were in contact with a recruit, the greater the chances they'll receive text and calls for overnight/day visits (see Table 1). More contact with a school leads to a direct result in these recruits gaining extensive knowledge through the recruiting process. This helps them to make an overall better decision when selecting a school based on the factors they valued, and viewed to be important to them personally.



## **Limitations**

Throughout the course of this research paper, there were many limitations that arose throughout the overall design of the research paper. There were definitely many things that prevented this paper from exceeding its full potential. The limitations that occurred was the lack of time given to do this paper, it was crammed into a two semesters time frame. Most research papers take a lot longer time to produce. Another limitation was the window we had to collect our initial data, it was a short time frame making it difficult to collect the exact number of respondents needed. The ways I would implement this paper to improve these limitations would possibly allow myself to take a semester off in between the classes need for this research paper, to finalize and go over any necessary corrections on the paper aspect. Also coming up the type of research questions used then and there during the period off from the class will allow myself the opportunity to get my data collected that is needed for this research paper.

## **Further Research**

After reflecting off of this research paper as a whole, there are certain aspects that I would of liked the opportunity to go back and look at into further detail to grasp more knowledge on. There a couple aspects that I thought would make this paper a lot better if I had the opportunity to do it again or be able to just shed some light on the topic if others need information regarding this topic. I would try to collect more data for each of the teams, having a consist number to work off of. I found myself working with a lot of respondents that played football, and basketball as I play these two sports. My teammates gave me some love helping me out with the survey. Based on their responses many valued certain aspects of the recruiting process over others. The best way to go about this would break down the teams based on the

sports and how they identify what their values were. This would allow patterns and connections to be made to see whether or not certain sports had influential factors that stood out for them during the recruiting process or as a whole there is just certain influential factors at the Division III level. Also getting other schools involved with this survey would allow information as a whole to see if schools shared some factors or whether it varied from school to school based on the school's your interested in throughout the recruiting process. These were the main points I would focus up on as you can always look closer into certain aspects of the paper as you wish to find more of a direct result then a open question.

### **Conclusion**

After concluding all of this information and putting together this research paper there were keys points that I was able to conclude from this research paper. The key points that I took away were many recruits valued the interactions of their professors the most in order to make their college choice. This related into a direct result of higher success within the recruiting process. Also many of these athletes felt they were dealt with honestly and with fairness when going through the course of the recruiting process. This demonstrates the impact professors have on student-athletes potentially coming to the school and how the slightest of things said to them can make a difference. Also we tend to see athlete valuing honesty and fairness when being dealt with during the process on how they want to know everything upfront and be able to make a true decision if everything they are needed to know.

Another key point I took away from this was majority of student athletes ranked athletics as most important college choice. When these athletes were began the recruiting process many of them stated that they felt excited, the more excited a recruit felt about the recruiting process the

higher the overall success was for them throughout the whole process. Studies have demonstrated that athletes want to continue playing sports at the next level for as long as they can, but at the end of the day it comes down to the end as we tend to see most Division III athletes valuing their academics as they try to figure out the next chapter within their lives. Each student athlete tends to have a different perceptions on how they go about looking into something, we tend to see different factors impact student-athletes but at the end of the day, there were common factors that every shared based on their values to make an ultimate decision at the Division III level to go through the recruiting process.

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## Appendices

### (Appendix A)

Start of Block: Questions: Recruiting Process

Q1 This survey is attempting to gather information from people who were recruited to play athletics in college. Were you recruited to participate in athletics at the collegiate level?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If This survey is attempting to gather information from people who were recruited to play athletics... = No

Display This Question:

If This survey is attempting to gather information from people who were recruited to play athletics... = Yes

Q2 This survey aims to explore the experiences of athletes during their recruiting period and uncover key influential factors of student-athletes final college choices. This survey has 22 questions and should take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Participation in this survey is completely voluntary, and you have the right to refuse participation at any point throughout the survey. All responses will be kept confidential.

Will you participate in this survey?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If This survey aims to explore the experiences of athletes during their recruiting period and uncove... = No

Q3 The following set of questions will ask you about your background.

Q4 How far is the drive home to St. John Fisher College?

▼ Less than 30 mins (1) ... More than 4 hours away (5)



Q5 How many people were in your graduating class?

---

Q6 How many sports were you recruited to play in college?

- One (1)
- Two (2)
- Three or more (3)

Q7 What is the first sport you got recruited to play in college?

▼ Football (1) ... Hockey (12)

Display This Question:

If How many sports were you recruited to play in college? = Two

Or How many sports were you recruited to play in college? = Three or more

Q8 What is the second sport you got recruited to play in college?

▼ Football (1) ... Hockey (12)

Display This Question:

If How many sports were you recruited to play in college? = Three or more

Q9 What is the third sport you got recruited to play in college?

▼ Football (1) ... Hockey (12)

Q10 Are you a transfer student?

Yes (1)

No (2)





Q14 How would you rank your experience when interacting people on your recruiting visit?

	Very Dissatisfying (1)	Somewhat Dissatisfying (2)	Neutral (3)	Somewhat Satisfying (4)	Very Satisfying (5)
Coaches (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Current players (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professors (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other school or athletic employees (4)

Q15 Rate your agreement with the following statements related to the recruiting process.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I was knowledgeable of the what the recruiting process entails (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was excited about the recruiting process (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt nervous about the recruiting process (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt prepared for the recruiting process (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I felt comfortable about the recruiting process (5)

A horizontal row of five empty circles, used for a Likert scale response.

Q16 The next section of questions relate to your decision making process.

Q17 Rank which athletic facilities were the most influential on your school choice.

\_\_\_\_\_ Locker Room (1)

\_\_\_\_\_ Weight Room (2)

\_\_\_\_\_ Game location (Fields, Gym, etc) (3)

\_\_\_\_\_ Training Facilities (4)

Q18 Rank the factors that impacted your decision the most influential on your school choice.

\_\_\_\_\_ Major (1)

\_\_\_\_\_ Campus Size (2)

\_\_\_\_\_ Teams Success/Team History (3)

\_\_\_\_\_ Location of School (4)

\_\_\_\_\_ Family Influence (5)

Q19 Rank the factors that were the most influential on your school choice.

\_\_\_\_\_ Money (1)

\_\_\_\_\_ Major (2)

\_\_\_\_\_ Location (3)

\_\_\_\_\_ Coaches (4)

Q20 How would you grade your final decision on your college of choice?

1 (1)

2 (2)

3 (3)

4 (4)

5 (5)



Q21 The next section of questions ask you to reflect on the entire recruiting process that you went through.

Q22 Rate your agreement with the following statements related to the overall recruiting process.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I felt I was treated fairly during the recruiting process (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt I was given special treatment (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt I was dealt with honesty during the process (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt I was lied to during the process (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q23 How successful do you feel your recruiting process was?

- 0 (0)
- 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- 7 (7)
- 8 (8)
- 9 (9)
- 10 (10)

Q24 Describe one thing that coaches/schools did during the process that you disliked.

---

Q25 What's one thing you'd do differently within the recruiting process?

---

End of Block: Questions: Recruiting Process

**(Appendix B)**

Cover Letter Email

Dear SJFC Students,

My name is Joshua Michels and I am an undergraduate student at St. John Fisher College. For my final project, I am examining the college recruiting process and you might be eligible to help me complete this study. If you are a college student who was been recruited to play at the collegiate level, I am inviting you to participate in this research study by completing the linked survey.

The linked questionnaire will require approximately 5 minutes of your time to complete. There is no compensation for responding nor is there any known risk. Copies of the resulting conclusions will be provided to my St. John Fisher College instructor and at a poster session on campus.

If you choose to participate in this project, please answer all questions as honestly as possible and it will be received electronically. Participation is strictly voluntary as it is not required and you may refuse to participate at any time throughout the course of this survey.

Thank you for taking time out of your schedule to help assist me in my educational endeavors. The data collected will provide useful information regarding the college recruiting process and

what are the most influential factors when deciding a college to attend. If you would like a summary copy of this study email me back using the below information. If you require additional information or have questions, please contact me or my supervising instructor using the contact information below.

If you require additional information or have questions, please contact me at the number listed below or my supervising instructor Dr. Emily Dane-Staples. If you are not satisfied with the manner in which this study is being conducted, you may report (anonymously if you so choose) any complaints to the Sport Management department at 585-385-8441 or the Institutional Review Board [irb@sjfc.edu](mailto:irb@sjfc.edu).

Sincerely,

Joshua Michels

[jm01898@sjfc.edu](mailto:jm01898@sjfc.edu)

585-331-2244

Dr. Emily Dane-Staples

[edane-staples@sjfc.edu](mailto:edane-staples@sjfc.edu)

585-899-3803

[https://sjfc.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_8prRJbnwJFtJggd](https://sjfc.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8prRJbnwJFtJggd)

### **(Appendix C)**

Follow-up Email/Letter

Dear Students,

Recently you were sent an email regarding collegiate recruiting and I see you haven't responded yet. This survey is short and should only take about approximately 5 minutes to complete. Conducting this survey will allow me to further extend my knowledge on the recruiting process to help identify key influential factors that impact a student-athlete's decision on what school they decide to attend. Identifying these factors allow myself and others to develop the best practices in recruiting to assist athletes in making an important life decision.

If you require additional information or have questions, please contact me at the number listed below or my supervising instructor Dr. Emily Dane-Staples. If you are not satisfied with the manner in which this study is being conducted, you may report (anonymously if you so choose)

any complaints to the Sport Management department at 585-385-8441 or the Institutional Review Board [irb@sjfc.edu](mailto:irb@sjfc.edu).

Thank you very much for your help by completing this survey, it is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Joshua Michels

Student

[jm01898@sjfc.edu](mailto:jm01898@sjfc.edu)

(585) 331-2244

Dr. Emily Dane-Staples

[edane-staples@sjfc.edu](mailto:edane-staples@sjfc.edu)

585-899-3803

### Table # 1

#### *Respondents Experiences During their Recruiting*

	Minimum	Maximum	Average
Number of schools athletes were recruited by	1 school	6+ school	4-5 schools
Number of times coaches visited at a high school	0 times	6+ times	3 times

Number of times coaches visited at neutral site	0 times	6+ times	0-1 times
Number of times coaches called	0 times	6+ times	3-4 times
Number of times coaches texted	0 times	6+ times	3-4 times
Number of school visits taken by the recruit	None	6+ visits	3-4 visits
Number of school overnights taken by the recruit	None	6+ overnights	1 overnight
Number of second visits taken by the recruit	None	6+ trips	1-2 trips

---

Note. Table values indicate the frequency and average responses by the sample participants.

## Table # 2

Respondents feelings about aspects of their recruiting visits

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Interactions with Stakeholders on Campus	Mean
Coaches	4.30

---

Players	4.15
Professors	3.70
Others	3.77

Recruits Feelings about their Recruiting Process

Recruit felt knowledgeable	3.89
Recruit felt excited	4.40
Recruit felt nervous	3.95
Recruit felt prepared	3.37
Recruit felt comfortable	3.71

---

Note. Table means indicate response on Likert scales where 1 indicates lower levels of agreement/discomfort and 5 indicates great agreement/comfort.

**Table # 3**

Recruit Ranking of Various Athletic and Institutional Factors

	Mean
Ranking of Influential Athletic Facility Aspects	

	Game Location (field, court, stadium, etc.)	1.65
	Training Facilities	2.38
	Locker Room	2.87
	Weight Room	3.08
Ranking of Influential School Aspects		
	Availability of major	1.83
	Location of the school	2.88
	Size of the campus	2.95
	Team success	3.15
	Family influence	4.17
Ranking of Factors that Influenced Final School Decision		
	Availability of major	1.85
	Cost of attending the school	2.55
	Location of the school	2.60



	Coaches of the program	2.97
Note. Table values indicate the ranking of factors. Lower means indicate a higher ranking and level of importance.		

**Table # 4**

## Respondent Evaluation of Overall Recruiting Process

	Mean
I felt I was treated fairly during my recruiting process	4.33
I felt I was given special treatment during the process	2.85
I felt I was dealt with honestly during the process	3.68
I felt I was lied to during the process	2.50
Note. Table values indicate a level of agreement with each of the statements. 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree.	

**Table # 5**

## Relationships between Aspects of the Recruiting Process and Overall Satisfaction with Choices

		Overall Grade of College Choice	Overall Success of Recruiting Process
Interactions with Stakeholders on Campus			
	Coaches	.046	.386**
	Players	.010	.235*
	Professors	.067	.235*
	Others	.036	.229*
Recruits Feelings about their Recruiting Process			
	Recruit felt knowledgeable	-.076	.273**
	Recruit felt excited	-.083	.380**
	Recruit felt nervous	-.029	-.009
	Recruit felt prepared	.080	.438**
	Recruit felt comfortable	.072	.407**

Recruits Perceptions of Treatment during the Recruiting Process			
	Fair treatment	-.052	.360**
	Special treatment	-.097	.101
	Dealt with honestly	.094	.350**
	Felt I was lied to	-.023	-.306**
Note.			