

Identifying Key Factors of Choice of College among Wisconsin High School Football Players

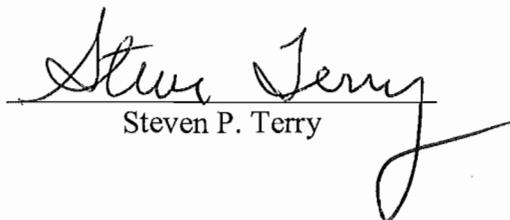
by

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A Research Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the  
Master of Science Degree  
in

Training and Development

Approved: 4 Semester Credits

  
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May, 2009

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**Title:** *Identifying Key Factors of Choice of College among Wisconsin High School Football Players*

**Graduate Degree:** MS Training and Development

**Research Advisor:** Steven P. Terry Ph.D.

**Month/Year:** May, 2009

**Number of Pages:** 66

**Style Manual Used:** American Psychological Association 5<sup>th</sup> edition

ABSTRACT

Recruitment of high school football players is a vital factor to the success of any collegiate program. High school football players go through a unique choice process while selecting a school and team to compete for. This study looked at the choice process that these student athletes will go through. A questionnaire was used to gather data on three research objectives; first to identify the most important factors of college choice among top Wisconsin football recruits, second to identify the most important aspects of a campus visit among top Wisconsin recruits, and third to determine if there are significant differences between recruits from large schools in comparison with recruits from small schools. The results of this research are intended to help collegiate coaches and recruiting coordinators to better define their recruitment strategies and to develop more successful campus visits.

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Acknowledgements

From the beginning of this project it was made evident that I would go through a series of tribulations before its completion. For each of these trials there seemed to always be someone along the way to provide resource, advice, and support. Without this assistance the project may never have reached the final stage.

The University of Wisconsin Stout and the Training and Development program, for providing me with the opportunity and resources to complete such a project.

Dr. Steven Terry, for the freedom he allowed me throughout the project and the motivation and final push to get the paper done.

Dr. Katherine Lui, for the permission and inspiration to choose a topic that I am truly interested in and passionate about.

Dr. Renee Surdick, for the advisement and advice through the first three chapters and technicalities of the project.

The University of Wisconsin Stout Athletic Department and Football Coaching Staff, for providing the funding for the mailing and other resources needed to complete the research.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

#### *Introduction*

Recruitment of top high school football players is vital to the success of a collegiate football program. Those programs that are able to obtain the most talented high school athletes are the same programs that continually compete at the championship level. The decision to choose the right school is complicated for any incoming freshman, but for student athletes the number of factors that contribute to this choice increases, making the decision more complex. Numerous factors come into play such as cost, location, academic reputation, coaching style, and social life. These are just a few of the factors which can make decisions of choosing a college very difficult for student athletes.

The number of students entering higher education is leveling, and in some areas of the nation even declining (Brooks, 2006). This will create a more competitive marketplace for colleges and universities. The same will hold true for college football programs as the number of student athletes decline as well. Universities pour a great deal of money into their football programs and the recruitment process, in the hope of producing a championship team that result in increased publicity, freshman applications, and donations.

There has not been a substantial amount of studies conducted on students' choice of which college to attend. Chapman (1981) contributes this to the fact that enrollments were growing in the past years and administrators have been more concerned with research on college how universities select student then how students choose a college. Also there have been very few theories or models developed to direct future studies. Even fewer studies have been conducted on choice of college for athletes and no recent studies have focused particularly on

Wisconsin high school football players. This study can aid the continued research in the area of student athlete college choice and help coaches better understand the factors that affect their recruits.

This chapter will present the statement of the problem, purpose and objectives of the study, significance of the study, assumptions, limitations, and definitions.

### *Statement of the Problem*

This study is designed to determine the most important factors that top Wisconsin high school football players consider when selecting a college. In addition, this study will identify important aspects of campus visits, and if there are any significant differences between Wisconsin high school football players who attended large schools versus small schools.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The results of this study will assist college football coaches, recruiting coordinators, and football operation managers responsible for identifying the pressures and influences they need to consider when developing their recruiting policy. Although coaches have an idea of what factors influence their top recruits in deciding what school to choose, findings in this study can better define those factors and make the recruiting policies more efficient. This study will also help determine what aspects of a campus visit are important to recruits. Campus visits are when a university and football program must be at their best. There is limited amount of time that recruits are on campus, and they will not be able to see everything on their visit. Findings from this study can help determine what aspects of the visit are most important to top recruits.

Student athletes come from different backgrounds and have different aspirations; one part of this study will look at how recruits from large schools compare to recruits from smaller

schools. This can help coaches adapt their recruiting methods based upon the background and intent of a specific recruit.

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the most important factors of college choice among top Wisconsin football recruits.
2. Identify the most important aspects of a campus visit among top Wisconsin football recruits.
3. Determine if there are significant differences between recruits from large schools and small schools in choice factors for college selection.

#### *Significance of the Study*

1. This study will aid in continued research for student athlete college choice. Although several studies have been conducted to research the factors that affect college choice, the majority of these studies have been conducted with student athletes who are already in college (Frerking, 2002). This study is one of the few studies that have been conducted during the actual recruitment process. There are also a limited number studies conducted specifically on high school football players and no recent studies that look at Wisconsin's top high school football recruits.
2. Total spending on athletics at the University of Michigan reached \$50 million in 2004. Budgets for division IA athletics increased twice as fast as overall university budgets from 1995 to 2001 (Jacobson, 2004). Although the economic and professional impact of this study has not been reviewed the impact of successful athletic programs has. Administrators have realized the advantages of having a winning team. Top programs provide a means of advertising for their institutions and securing additional funding

(Davies, 1994). Success within the athletic department can positively impact the institutions overall reputation amongst incoming freshman. Championship football teams over the past twenty years have lead to an increase in undergraduate admission applications for the years following the championship (Toma and Cross, 1998). This allows for greater selectivity of admissions and a higher caliber undergraduate reputation (Letawsky, et al 2003). Also success of a program stimulates booster donations for the athletic department and the university as a whole (Zimbalist, 1999).

3. Wisconsin does not encompass division II collegiate football. This leaves the University of Wisconsin Madison as the only scholarship football team in the state. The most prominent football conference in Wisconsin is the WIAC, in which 80 percent of the athletes competing are products of Wisconsin high schools (WIAC website). However, in the past years scholarship schools have increased their recruitment efforts in the state of Wisconsin. The NSIC has been one the most invasive conferences recruiting the state. In 2006 the NSIC had 14 all-conference players out of the state of Wisconsin; in 1996 there were 6, and in 1986 only 3 (NSIC website). This study can help Wisconsin coaches better understand the choice factors of their top recruits.
4. Finally, this study can help to improve the recruitment policy of football programs and by giving them more information on their top recruits help them be more effective. Information obtained through this study could also be used to increase the efficiency and time management of the recruitment process, potentially leading to recruitment at a lower cost.

### *Assumptions of the Study*

The assumptions of this study are:

1. This study is linked directly to the state of Wisconsin. Because the study covers high school across entire state it encompasses many different demographics of the state. While the findings are specific, the results may be useful to future studies in other areas.
2. Factors that are important in determining choice of college may change over time. Long (2003) has shown that as higher education transforms, economic conditions change, and government institutions change policies that affect factors which influence choice will change. This study can not account for major changes in the economic condition of the area or major changes in policies. Subtle changes are expected and it should be understood that results of this study will become less relevant as these changes occur.

### *Limitations of the Study*

The limitations of this study are:

1. The results of this study are limited to the top recruits in the state of Wisconsin as determined by Collegiate Sports Data. This company gathers their information directly from the high school coaches by asking them who on their team could potentially play at the next level. Although this is not the best way of determining the top recruits in the state, it is the most widely used.
2. There are countless factors that play a role in choice of college. Not all factors could be represented in the survey. The factors were chosen based upon the literature and surveys used in different studies.

3. The instrument used to collect data in this study relied solely on quantitative data. This was helpful in the determining which factors are important, but could not answer why the respondents scored one factor higher than another.

### *Definitions*

AFCA- American Football Coaches Association

Aptitude- The skills a person has the ability to learn in the future (Chapman, 1981, p.493).

College Choice- A developmental process that begins with considering the possibility of going to college and ends with choosing and seeking admission to a particular college.

Econometrics- Combining economic theories with social data to analyze and test economic relationships (Bateman & Spruill, 1996).

NCAA- National Collegiate Athletic Association, a voluntary organization with a legislation procedure to put in place rules and regulations (NCAA web site)

Matriculates- Students who registrar and are accepted into a university (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

Recruit- An athlete who is desired by a particular program.

Recruitment- The process of finding and attracting a desired person to an athletic program.

SES- Socioeconomic status, the social and economic position that gives ones status (Chapman 1981, p.495)

## Chapter II

### Literature Review

#### *Introduction*

Recruitment of high school football players has always been vital to the success of a collegiate football program. The process of selecting a college or university for a high school athlete is a complex decision involving many different factors (Crowley, 2004). Because of this, colleges, athletic departments, and coaching staffs are forced to put together technical and complex recruiting procedures that have become increasingly costly. Although there has been some research conducted relating to the factors that influence college choice, there is limited research focusing on the factors that influence college choice of student athletes. This chapter will review current and past literature relating to the theories and models of college choice, how the choice process has changed over the years, how student athletes differ from the general student population, factors that influence student athletes, recruitment, and campus visits.

#### *Choice of College*

Choosing a college as a high school student is clearly important. Higher education is both expensive and time consuming, and this choice can determine the path of the student's future. Because of the significance of this choice, there is a risk attached to the decision (Scott, 2006). Studies have shown that the perception of risk is a key factor in the decision making process (Connor & Dewson, 2001). Although there has been substantial research on students' ambitions to attend or not to attend college, there has been less attention given to the decision of which college to choose (Chapman, 1981). With the recent drops in enrolment numbers and limited budgets, many institutions have found the need to enhance their ability to recruit students, which has re-opened research on choice of college (Delaney, 2006).

Bateman & Spruill, (1996) discusses a number of theoretical models that have been developed to explain the college choice process. Bateman & Spruill separate college choice models into three categories. Econometric models which specify that students evaluate different colleges on certain economic factors. These can include geographic location, cost, financial aid, rate of return, and other academic factors. The premise behind the econometric models is that students will evaluate the economic benefit of choosing a school. Sociological models focus on the individual factors that influence students. Student's educational aspirations play a role in the status attainment process and individuals various degrees, occupations, and achievements lead to prestige or status. Combined Models use the most dominant indicators in the decision making process out of both sociological and econometric models. Combining both models allows a wider range of variables and gives more insight to the choice process, recognizing decision-making as an ongoing process.

Three main models of college choice have emerged as the most accepted and used; Chapman 1981, Litten 1982, and Hossler and Gallagher 1987.

Chapman (1981) suggests that student college choice is influence by a set of student characteristics as well as a series of external influences. Student characteristics are grouped into two categories: socioeconomic status; and aptitude of the student. Socioeconomic status or SES acts as a backdrop that influences attitudes and behaviors that will affect choice of college. Chapman reported that students from homes with a higher SES are more likely to attend a four year school and prefer private universities where middle income students tend to prefer state universities and lower income students prefer state colleges or community colleges. Aptitude influences high school performance in GPA, class rank, and aptitude tests. Students with higher

levels of aptitude are also more likely to get encouragement and advice from parents and counselors on choice of college.

Chapman (1981) groups external influences into three categories: the influence of significant persons; fixed characteristics of the institution; and the institutions recruiting efforts. Significant persons shape the expectations of a particular school and advise students on where to attend. Chapman reported that students are influenced, in order from most to least by: parents; counselors; other students; teachers; and college admission officers. Relatively fixed college characteristics play a role in Chapman's model. These are characteristics that could be modified over time but for the short term are relatively fixed, such as, location, cost, and desired courses or majors. Cost obviously plays a major role in this model but Chapman recognizes location as an equal factor as he states that over 50 percent of freshmen attend colleges within 50 miles of their home and 92 percent within 500 miles of their home with many of those not in 92 percentile leaving because of lack of options in their geographical area. Another relatively fixed influence is the availability of courses and programs. School may change programs to match the desire of the students, but changing programs is a time and financially consuming task. The last external factor of this model is the college's efforts to communicate with students. With more intense competition colleges are using marketing and recruitment techniques to influence students who might have not considered the institution. This model does not exhaust all possible factors that influence students, but does mix student characteristics and external factors to help show how choice is determined.

## Influences on Student College Choice

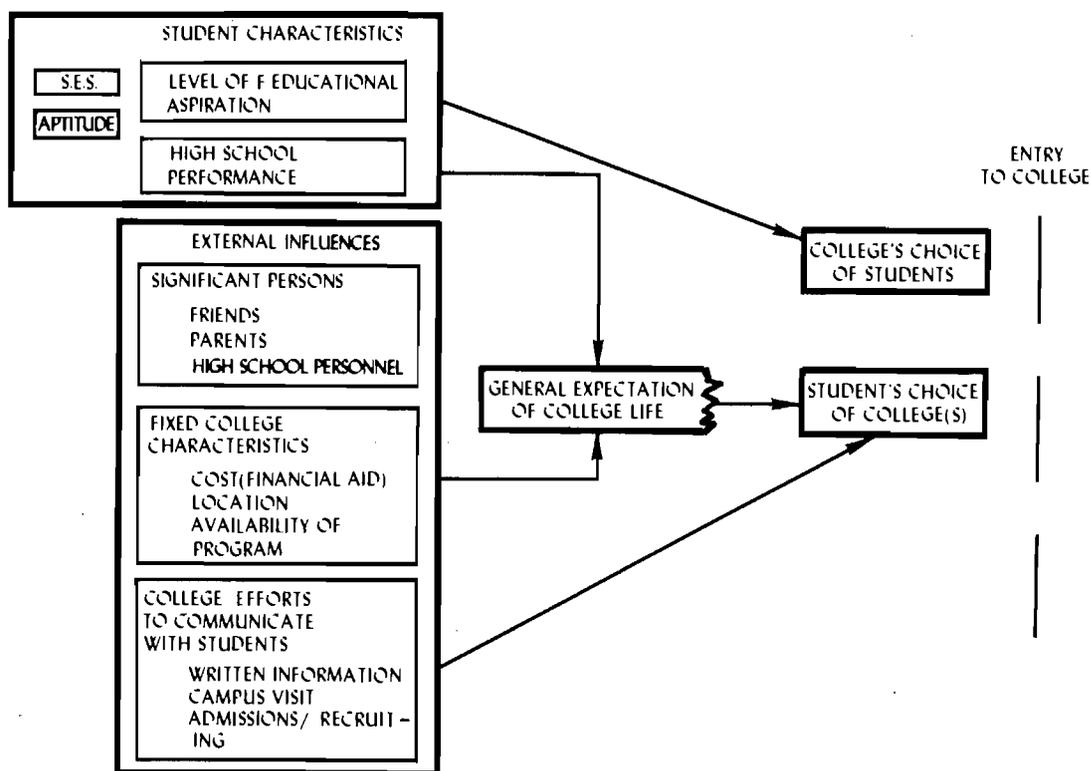


Figure 1

Chapman (1981)

Another widely recognized model is Littens' (1982) "Expanded Model of the college Choice Process". This model focuses on personal and social factors that influence the college choice process. Litten describes his process as a funnel, with a large number of students considering a college early in the choice process and funneling out to a smaller amount by the registration process. This model is divided into three stages; the first stage emphasized the sociological side, while the second and third phase infuses economic variables. Stage one specifically looks at: background, personal attributes, high school attributes, student performance, and environment. Stages two and three include: influences, public policy, college actions, and college characteristics. Identifying specific variable in this model allows it to be more focused and useful. Also the design of this model allows segmentation of students into

race, gender, ability level, parent's education, and geographic location. Littens' model has the concept of a funnel and segmentation of population but does little to assist in the influencing of students decisions.

Hossler and Gallagher (1987) developed the "Three Phase Model of College Choice", which has become the most widely used model on college choice (see Figure 2.1).

Three Phase Model

Model Dimensions	Influential Factors		Student Outcomes
	Individual Factors	Organisational Factors	
Predisposition (Phase One)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Student Characteristics</li> <li>* Significant Other</li> <li>* Education activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* School characteristics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. College option</li> <li>Search for :</li> <li>b. other options</li> </ul>
Search (Phase Two)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Student preliminary college value</li> <li>* Student search activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* College and University search activities (Search for Students)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. choice set</li> <li>b. other options</li> </ul>
Choice (Phase Three)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Choice Set</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* College and university courtship activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Choice</li> </ul>

Figure 1.1

A THREE PHASE MODEL OF COLLEGE CHOICE

Figure 2.1 (Hossler & Gallagher 1987)

Phase one (see Figure 2.2) is labeled the predisposition phase and is when a student determines whether he or she will continue their education past high school. In this stage student characteristics and background correlates with the decision to attend or not attend college. One of the most important background characteristics is SES. Outside of background factors the attitudes of parents and peers can influence the decision during this phase. Students who receive parental encouragements or have friends where planning to continue their educations are more

likely to attend as well. Phase one also links educational activities to the choice to attend; students partaking in student government, drama, or athletics are more likely to attend. When colleges and high schools have similar characteristics there is a positive impact on the predisposition phase.

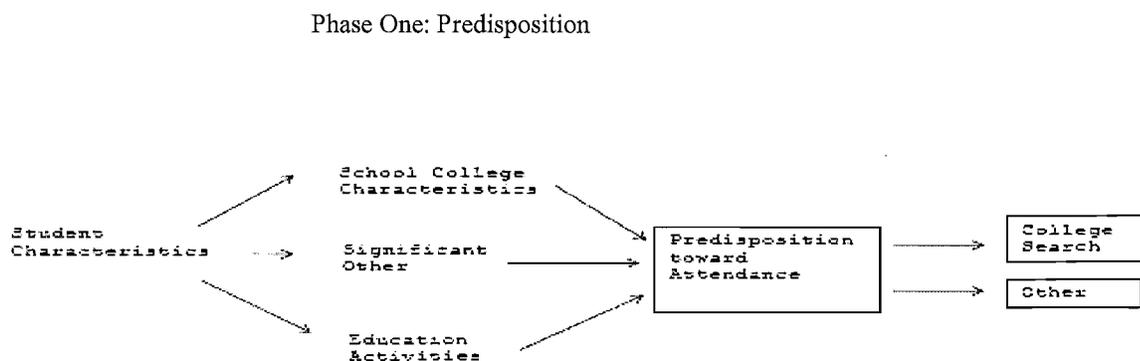


Figure 2.2

(Hossler &amp; Gallagher, 1987)

Phase two the search phase is when matriculates start to seek more information about colleges (see Figure 2.3). During this time interaction between potential matriculates and universities may begin to occur, thus while students are searching for institutions, institutions are searching for students. Also during this phase the student will develop a choice set, a group of institutions that a student has decided to apply to and seek more information to make a final decision.

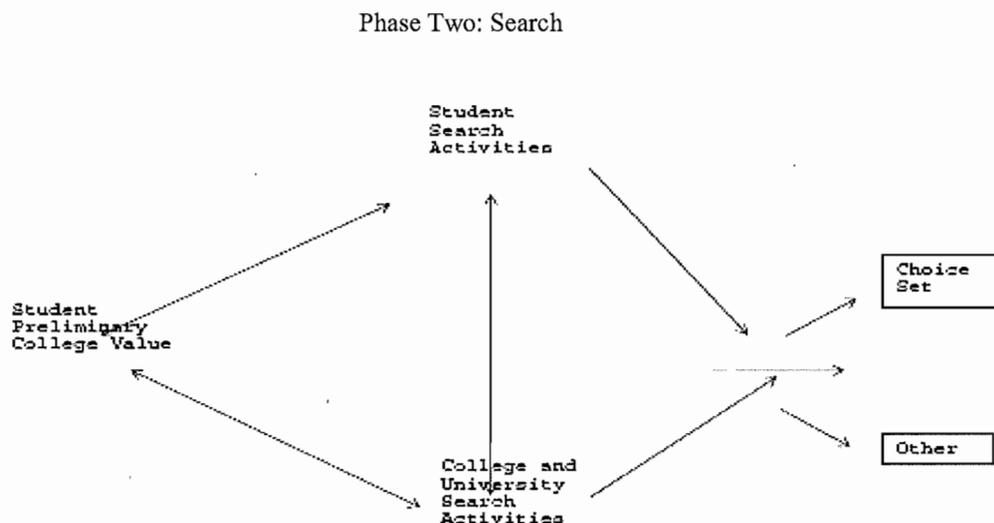


Figure 2.3

(Hossler &amp; Gallagher, 1987)

Phase three (see Figure 2.4) is the choice phase and is when the student's choice set is evaluated. During this phase the student selects a university based upon their preferences, the attributes of the university, and the courtship procedures of the university. These courtship procedures can be anything from personal letters, phone calls, scholarships, and campus visits.

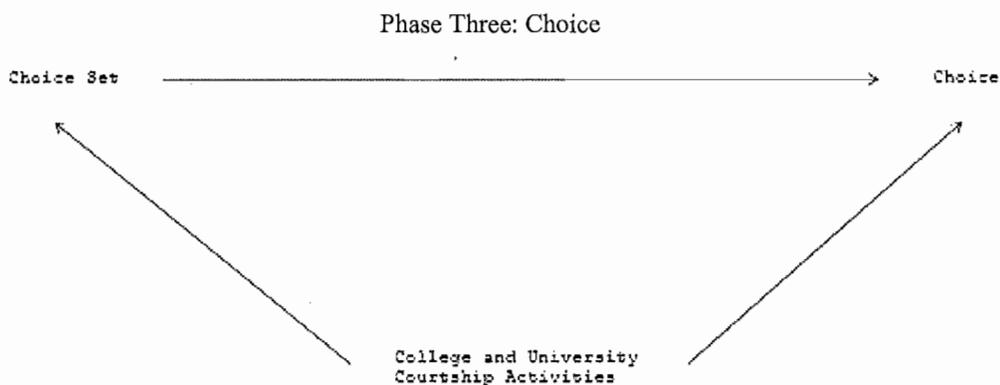


Figure 2.4

(Hossler &amp; Gallagher 1987)

Hossler & Gallagher's model shows the choice process in a way that can help institutions increase their chance of influencing a potential matriculate in the decision process. While most universities concentrate their efforts on influencing students during the choice phase to choose their university over another, the more critical phase is the search phase. Getting to students

during this phase allows an institution to get into the choice set of more students expanding their applicant pool.

Using these models as a foundation many studies have been conducted on choice of college (Bateman & Spruill, 1996; Abell, 2003; Cabrera et al., 1999; Dixon & Martin, 1991; Smith & Mathews, 1990; Brooks, 2006; Bateman & Kennedy, 1999; Johnson & Stewart, 1991). As more research becomes available an increase of factors determining choice of college are studied as well: academic reputation, areas of study available, cost, reputation of faculty, student population, extracurricular programs, teachers availability, location, diversity backgrounds, are a few researched in the recent studies (Canale & Dunlap, 1996).

A survey by Moogan and Baron (2003) found that males are more likely to be encouraged to pursue a higher education by their parents than females. Also students who do choose to attend a higher education institution relied on information from their parents more than teachers.

Brooks (2006) reported that students tend to choose colleges that have an average SAT or ACT score which is similar to their scores. Brooks listed academic reputation, quality of faculty, costs, location, and financial aid, to be the major influences of choice of college. Brooks also found that the main reason students attend college is to achieve personal and career goals.

Canale & Dunlap, (1996) conducted a study involving 543 high school juniors and seniors to investigate the importance of certain college factors affecting choice of college. In their findings, areas of study offered, costs, teacher attributes, and academic reputation were ranked the highest. Canale & Dunlap, (1996) also linked the importance of “areas of study available” to the trend of today’s vocational conscious students who wish to gain certain skills in

order to showcase themselves in a specific market. The importance of cost was also linked to rising college tuition rates and difficult economic times.

(Brooks, 2006) conducted a study that looked at the time frame of when students determine they will attend college and which people have highest levels of influence on the decision to attend a certain college as well as other factors that influenced their decision. They concluded that academic reputation was the most important factor to high school students. High school students reported that they utilized friends and peers to gather information on a college more than media. Only 10% of students made their choice of a college before their senior year. Approximately 70% made the choice during their senior year and 20% waited until after graduation. Brooks (2006) also found that lower SEC students and Blacks were more likely to utilize high school counselors and less likely to use the families for college information.

Scott (2006) found reputation of the institution, courses offered, and social life to be the top influential factors. Of the students reporting, 97% found reputation of the institution to be important. Through qualitative research they found that many students identified reputation of the institution with age of the university, entry levels, and how often the institution is publicly recognized.

Delaney (2006) conducted a study to examine the relationship between parental income and student's college choice process. Findings with statistical significance were: higher income students rated academic prestige of the college, campus social life, majors of interest, and opportunities for extracurricular and off-campus activities higher than low income students. Lower income students significantly rated opportunities for internships, and job placement rates higher than high income students. Delaney (2006) also found that high income students were

more concerned with the college's surroundings, neighborhood, town, and location of the college.

Every year Noel-Levitz (2007) sends out an instrument to measure student satisfaction levels and priorities, using more than 70 items. None of these items address factors to enroll, but the instrument is used by university recruiters to develop trends and determine what will be important to future generations. This years findings of over 35,000 responses showed that students want to know how much their education will cost. Students are looking for bottom line cost instead of rough estimates. Students want to be able to understand their financial aid and what opportunities for financial support are available to them. Last, students want to maintain and increase the reputation of their university, as a sense of pride and for prestige among future employers.

#### *How College Choice Has Changed*

Today's students entering higher education institutions differ from those of previous generations (Abrahamson, 2000). As higher education has transformed in the past 40 years, the choice of college decision has become more complex. Colleges continue to differentiate themselves increasing variation and options for students. Tuition rates have climbed in real terms to over double that of 40 years ago. At the same time financial aid and grant opportunities have expanded and the benefit of having a college degree has increased as well. Real incomes for those with a bachelor's degree grew 14.6 % from 1978 to 1998 (Long, 2003).

Long (2003) researched data from 1972, 1982, and 1992 to look for significant differences in the college choice decision. The findings showed that college cost has actually decreased as a factor over time. Distance became less of a factor and college quality became more important during the time span as well as the importance of faculty quality. The research also found that the 1992

students were significantly more likely to choose a school that has median ACT, SAT score equal to or above their own, which can suggest that today's students are striving to reach a higher level.

#### *Non-Athletes vs. Athletes*

It is important to note the difference in the college choice factors that affect non-athletes in comparison to athletes. Since athletes not only chose a university, but also choose a team and coach, the choice process for them becomes much more complex than non-athletes. Letawsky et al (2003) reports that athletes have up to 3 times the number of factors in the college choice process than non-athletes. Letawsky et al (2003) studied this difference and found that degree options were the top factor for both groups. Athletes rated reputation of the sports teams highly important, while non-athlete rated academic reputation highly. Findings in this study suggested that although athletes have different factors that are important to them, non-athletic factors are just as important in influencing college choice.

#### *Factors Influencing Athletes Choice of College*

For a student athlete the choice of which college to attend can be one of the most difficult decisions that student will have to make. Student athletes have to consider a broader base of school characteristics, since the student athletes are influence by both choice of college and choice of team (Crowley, 2004). Research on an athlete's choice of college uses the same models as for non-athletes with one additional phase. In Hossler & Gallagher's predisposition phase students determine whether they intend to pursue a higher education. Athletes also must determine if they still desire to compete at the collegiate level. Once that decision is made the models hold true, but additional factors need to be studied. There is however limited research which focuses on student athletes. Some of the more significant studies which identify factors of

choice of college amongst athletes are by Armour (1968), Reihl (1975), Peters (2000), Heilman (1998), Hendricks (1995), Elliott (1995), Frerking (2002), Letawksy (2003), Kraft (1996), Krause (2002) and Goldsmith (1987).

These studies all have differences, but looking at them as a whole a pattern emerges, and most factors can be categorized. Ryan et al (2007) established six categories of the more significant factors based on a more extensive literature review. The first is academic factors: academic prestige, quality of education, and graduation rates. Second are coach's influences: personal attention, sincerity, enthusiasm, personality, and style of coaching. Third is program influences: reputation, competition level, tradition, and productivity. Fourth is personal influence: family, coaches, and counselors. Fifth is a geographic influence: location, facilities, glitz, and surrounding cities. Last are financial influences: cost, benefits, and future ambition.

Fortier (1986) surveyed freshman football players from six small colleges to examine why graduating football players select certain schools. Results showed factors in the top ten: 1) academic program availability, 2) academic reputation, 3) head coach, 4) parents, 5) athletic scholarship, 6) football tradition, 7) college location, 8) job placement 9) financial aid, 10) costs. There are three major limitations to this study; first the study takes place after the subjects are already in college. This asks the student-athletes to answer questions based on memory, not current thoughts or feelings during the recruitment process. Second, the study is outdated, and lastly the study is limited to six selected small schools and students who have chosen to attend a small school.

Klenosky (2001) took a sample of 27 Division 1A collegiate football players and asked them to determine the factors that played a role in their college selection. Klenosky also conducted follow-up interviews to help determine why they felt certain factors were important.

The results suggested that the coaching staff, schedule of the team, and facilities were the top factors in determining college selection. Follow-up responses gave more depth to the factors, such as athletes felt that the coach made them comfortable with their decision and that the coaching staff would be integral to the enjoyment to the student-athlete's experience. This study also had some limitations: Again, the study asked athletes to rely on their memory of past experiences and although the study gained more depth, his sample size was insufficient to lead to conclusive statistical findings.

Kraft (1996) surveyed 74 athletes who had been recruited, made official visits, and been offered scholarships by a Division IA university in attempt to determined the factors that influenced football prospects in their choice of college. Kraft used a likert scale and open-ended questions on football, academic, and campus influences. More than 30 factors were represented in Kraft's survey and he also looked at events that take place when an athlete visits a school. Results of the study showed that honesty and interest from the coaching staff ranked at number one. Overall, football-related factors were clearly more important to recruits then academic factors which ranked in the middle of the list. Campus factors such as size of school, appearance of campus, and locations of school ranked well behind both football, and academic factors.

Moffit (1982) designed an interesting study which compared what coaches felt were important factors against what player's selected as important factors in selecting a college. He looked at 18 major universities across Texas and discovered that there are many perceptual differences between coaches and players in many areas.

Sutton (1983) conducted a study to explore the factors in the decision process of college choice for high school All-American football players. Sutton discovered that the single most important factor among these blue chip athletes was academic programs or majors offered at a

university. Other key factors were community support, tradition, quality coaches, and quality players.

### *Recruitment and Campus Visits*

Athletic programs spend millions of dollars promoting their program and funding the coaches' travel to watch and meet with prospective athletes (Frerking, 2002). Recruitment is a big game and everyone is trying to gain a competitive advantage and institutions must look at how they can attract quality student athletes in order to develop successful programs (Crowley, 2004).

Coaches use many methods during the recruitment process, such as letters, phone calls, face-to-face meetings, and using current player's relationships with potential recruits. Each method has a specific purpose, all helping to influence high school players to join a certain program (Frerking, 2002). Januszewski (1960) stated that college coaches should follow a four step method to recruiting high school athletes: contact the high school coach by letter, arrange a meeting with the prospect, talk with parents at their home, and invite the recruit to visit the campus. The steps in this process still are used as the foundation for the recruitment process, but today coaches are expected to go above and beyond the basics to lure top talent to their schools

Present day recruitment has become a multifaceted science. Levels of technology have changed the landscape of college recruiting (Krause, 2007). Programs who have constantly recruited in their own backyard are now brought into the national recruitment challenge. Coaches are increasingly becoming more exposed to a larger number of potential recruits. Technology allows coaches to sit in their offices and watch streaming video of hundreds of players across the nation (Krause, 2007). In fact, today the recruiting process has become so complex that high school athletes are paying companies to market their talents to schools. Coaches receive

numerous e-mails and attend countless recruitment camps throughout the year (Pennington, 2006).

Decisions being made during the recruitment process will have a great impact on the both the individual and as well as the institution they will be attending. Because the outcome of choosing a college for some athletes will play a factor in their future career and potentially millions of dollars, decisions for the recruit and family members becomes increasingly difficult (Ryan, et al, 2007). Athletes that may not intend to play at the professional level also use athletics as a way to get accepted in prestigious school and be involved in strong networking opportunities. Athletes and their families are increasingly trying to determine which university will be appropriate for their educational future and showcase their athletic abilities (Pennington, 2006). Coaches should begin to look at how student athletes make decisions on college choice and what key factors influence them (Crowley, 2004).

At some point in time of the recruitment process the student athlete will make a campus visit. Perry (2006) compared a campus visit to test-driving a car. This is the time for the student to really see what's happening on a day-to-day basis at a school and it is important for the campus and staff to make their best impression. June (2006) conducted a study to determine if facilities play a key role in students' enrollment decisions. The answer she found was a clear cut yes. Students responded that facilities are a very important factor in choosing a college, particularly facilities within their major. 62% of students in the study reported that the most influential factor during their campus visit was the appearance of the college's grounds and buildings. Other items on student "must see" list was building housing their major, residence halls, library, and technology facilities. Johnson (1991) found that the four most important events of a campus visit for football recruits were: 1) tour of the football facilities, 2) interaction with

team members, 3) interaction with the coaching staff, and 4) one-on-one meeting with the head coach. Kraft shows that it is not only what recruits see on a campus visit but also who they see that is important. Perry (2006) recommends that recruits are paired with current students that can provide them with more insight about the college. Matching recruits with current students many times is the only way recruits can find out which majors are the toughest, how easy classes are to get into, and what happens on Friday nights.

### *Summary*

Through the review of this literature a solid understanding to the important areas for understanding the complex nature of the college choice process was shown. The literature shows that students go through a college choice process that involves at least three phases. Many factors seem to be important to this decision process. From the literature, the top factors that influence choice of college seem to be academic reputation of the school, degree programs offered, cost, and location. Student athletes have additional factors to consider in the choice process, but do not differ significantly from the general student population. The number one non-academic factor that influenced athletes was the personality and honesty of the coaching staff. Tradition of the program and athletic facilities also ranked highly throughout the literature. Recruitment was shown as highly important throughout the literature and although little was found on campus visits, research suggest that this may be the most important part of the recruitment process. The factors that influence college choice will change as policies and culture change over time. Research on this subject will need to be continually conduct to identify changes in the future.

## Chapter III

### Methodology

#### *Introduction*

The purpose of this study was to identify the key factors that influence Wisconsin high school football players in the college choice process and the most important aspects of a campus visit. Also the study looked at any significant differences between recruits from large school and small schools. This chapter will describe the research design, population, samples, instrumentation, and data collection.

#### *Research Design*

A quantitative study was developed from the need to analyze the factors that influence Wisconsin high school football player's choice of college. A survey with a likert scale was used to allow the respondents to rate each factor (Appendix: A). The study was not conducted ex post facto like most of the studies in this area have been. This study was conducted in the present, asking respondents question about the process that they were going through at that time. The subjects in the study were all players indicated by collegiate sports data Inc. A sample of 200 was used in order to receive an appropriate response. The data was tallied using the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 15 for quantitative analysis. Analysis on the data included frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, standard deviation, and cross tabulations on the independent variables.

This design was selected to gather the data needed to fulfill the research objectives. The simplicity of the design relates to the simplicity of the desired end products. With this data simple lists of the most important factors in choice of college and the important aspects of a campus visit for these subjects could be created.

### *Population and Samples*

The subjects for the study were all high school football players in the state of Wisconsin recognized as top recruits by Collegiate Sports Data. This company contacts all the high school coaches across the country and discusses what players on their team might be able to play at the next level. This year they reported 826 high school football players in the state of Wisconsin as potential recruits across all NCAA divisions. The population is determined by high school coaches who are a good source but are not consistent across the board. One coach may rate a player as a division IAA player and another coach rate the same player as a division III player. The result is an imperfect way to identify the top recruits in Wisconsin, but it is the widest used resource among college football coaches.

The total size of the target population was 886 recruits. A random sample of 200 was used for the study to secure the responses needed to ensure accuracy. The sample was chosen via the use of Research Randomizer software 4.0.

### *Instrumentation*

A survey questionnaire (Appendix: A) was designed and utilized as the data collection instrument for this study. All data for the study was collected January through May of 2007. This is the time that the subjects were going through the recruitment process. The survey was mailed to the subjects and included an informed consent form since not all subjects were over the age of 18 (Appendix: B).

Lee and Nelson's (2006) instrument design process was used as a basis for the development of this instrument. The questions were compiled from the literature and other studies that had been piloted and tested for reliability. Thus, no pilot test was done on the instrument used in this study. The final instrument encompassed three major sections: 1

demographic question was used to determine the division the athlete played in. Section 2 used a likert scale to measure the level of influence chosen factors had on the subject's choice of college. Section 3 also uses a likert scale to measure the importance level of chosen aspects of a campus visit. These aspects were also chosen from the literature and other studies.

To ensure content validity, all items on the survey questionnaire were evaluated using a 2x2 matrix. This determined the degree to which the instrument collected data that related to studies objectives. Since all factors in this study have been used before the reliability has already been established. The reliability of each factor was an alpha .84 or greater, which is considered an acceptable level. All of the variables produced an overall consistency reliability score.

#### *Data Analysis*

Once survey questionnaires were returned, data was tallied using the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 15 for quantitative analysis. Analysis on the data included frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, standard deviation, and cross tabulations on the independent variables.

#### *Limitations*

The limitations in the methodology are:

1. The study was limited to recruits solely in the state of Wisconsin.
2. The population was chosen by an external company.
3. The instrument did not represent all factors that could influence choice of college.
4. Generalizations from the population can not be made for all high school football players.

## Chapter IV: Results

This chapter documents the major findings of this study which identified the key factors that influence Wisconsin high school football players in the college choice process, and the most important aspects of a campus visit. The analysis illustrates the correlation and levels of significance between variables included in the survey instrument. A survey questionnaire was used to gather relevant data from 25 high school football players from the state of Wisconsin. The population of this study was defined by the Collegiate Sports Data inc.

### *Instrument Returns*

On May 12<sup>th</sup> 2008 the data gathering period ended. At that time 25 members of the sample had responded to the survey questionnaire. This reflected a 12.5% return rate. Data was tallied using (SPSS). Analysis on the data included frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, standard deviation, and cross tabulations. Also independent T-Tests were used to determine the correlations between the respondents from big and small divisions. Two tailed sig. test were also used to determine the level of significance in differences between the divisions.

### *Findings*

The survey instrument included only one demographic question. This question asked respondent to identify the division which their high school participated in. Table 1 shows the frequency and percent of respondents for each division.

Table 1

*Division of Respondents*

	Division 1	Division 2	Division 3	Division 4	Division 5	Division 6	Division 7	Missing	Total
Frequency	5	5	6	3	4	0	1	1	25
Percent	20%	20%	24%	12%	16%	0%	4%	4%	100%

Table 1 shows that 5 or 20% played division 1, 5 or 20% played division 2, 6 or 24% played division 3, 3 or 12% played division 4, 4 or 16% played division 5, 0 respondents played division 6, and 1 or 4% of the respondents played high school football for a division 7 school. One respondent did not fill out this portion of the survey.

Section 2 asked respondents to rate the level of influence different factors played in the decision on choice of school. This section included 20 items labeled (A1-A20) and was based upon a 6 point Likert scale one through six. Table 2 shows the responses to items (A1-A20).



Item A01, 'Academic Reputation', 0 or 0% rated a 1, 1 or 4% rated a 2, 4 or 16% rated a 3, 7 or 28% rated a 4, 8 or 32% rated a 5, and 5 or 20% rated a 6.

For item A02, 'Advice from Family and Friends', 0 or 0% rated a 1, 0 or 0% rated a 2, 5 or 20% rated a 3, 8 or 32% rated a 4, 6 or 24% rated a 5, and 6 or 24% rated a 6.

For item A03, 'Appearance of Campus', 0 or 0% rated a 1, 3 or 12% rated a 2, 2 or 8% rated a 3, 6 or 36% rated a 4, 10 or 40% rated a 5, and 4 or 16% rated a 6. This data shows that 40% rated appearance of campus a 5 showing importance, while only 16% rated a 6 of highest importance.

For item A04, 'Athletic Facilities', 0 or 0% rated a 1, 0 or 0% rated a 2, 2 or 8% rated a 3, 9 or 36% rated a 4, 5 or 20% rated a 5, and 9 or 36% rated a 6.

For item A05, 'Athletic Tradition', 0 or 0% rated a 1, 0 or 0% rated a 2, 3 or 12% rated a 3, 12 or 48% rated a 4, 6 or 24% rated a 5, and 4 or 16% rated a 6. Based on the data 48% of the respondents rated Athletic Tradition a 4, just in the upper half of the Likert scale, showing mild importance.

For item A06, 'Availability of Desired Major', 0 or 0% rated a 1, 0 or 0% rated a 2, 1 or 4% rated a 3, 5 or 20% rated a 4, 5 or 20% rated a 5, and 14 or 56% rated a 6. This shows that 56% the respondents stated that the availability of their desired major is of the highest importance.

For item A07, 'Campus Social Life', 1 or 4% rated a 1, 1 or 4% rated a 2, 3 or 12% rated a 3, 7 or 28% rated a 4, 9 or 36% rated a 5, and 4 or 16% rated a 6.

For item A08, 'Conference Affiliation', 2 or 8% rated a 1, 1 or 4% rated a 2, 6 or 24% rated a 3, 5 or 20% rated a 4, 6 or 24% rated a 5, and 5 or 20% rated a 6.

For item A09, 'Cost of Tuition', 2 or 8% rated a 1, 3 or 12% rated a 2, 2 or 8% rated a 3, 6 or 24% rated a 4, 4 or 16% rated a 5, and 8 or 32% rated a 6.

For item A10, 'Financial Aid Opportunities', 2 or 8% rated a 1, 4 or 16% rated a 2, 4 or 16% rated a 3, 4 or 16% rated a 4, 6 or 24% rated a 5, and 5 or 20% rated a 6.

For item A11, 'Future Career Opportunities, 0 or 0% rated a 1, 0 or 0% rated a 2, 0 or 0% rated a 3, 5 or 20% rated a 4, 8 or 32% rated a 5, and 12 or 48% rated a 6. The data shows that 48% rated future career opportunities at the highest rating, while 0% of the respondents gave a rating of 1, 2, or 3, showing that all of the respondents gave ratings of 4 or higher.

For item A12, 'Graduation Rate of Player', 3 or 12% rated a 1, 0 or 0% rated a 2, 3 or 12% rated a 3, 8 or 32% rated a 4, 7 or 28% rated a 5, and 4 or 16% rated a 6.

For item A13, 'High School Coaches Advice', 3 or 12% rated a 1, 1 or 4% rated a 2, 6 or 24% rated a 3, 7 or 28% rated a 4, 4 or 16% rated a 5, and 4 or 16% rated a 6.

For item A14, 'Honesty of Coaching Staff', 1 or 4% rated a 1, 0 or 0% rated a 2, 0 or 0% rated a 3, 5 or 20% rated a 4, 7 or 28% rated a 5, and 12 or 48% rated a 6. The data reveals that 96% of the respondents rated this item to be within the top half of the scale, with 48% rating it at the highest level.

For item A15, 'Location of School', 0 or 0% rated a 1, 1 or 4% rated a 2, 6 or 24% rated a 3, 6 or 24% rated a 4, 3 or 12% rated a 5, and 9 or 36% rated a 6.

For item A16, 'Opportunity to Play Early', 1 or 4% rated a 1, 1 or 4% rated a 2, 3 or 12% rated a 3, 5 or 20% rated a 4, 5 or 20% rated a 5, and 10 or 40% rated a 6.

For item A17, 'Personality of Head Coach', 1 or 4% rated a 1, 0 or 0% rated a 2, 0 or 0% rated a 3, 4 or 16% rated a 4, 7 or 28% rated a 5, and 13 or 52% rated a 6. This data reveals that

52% of respondents placed the personality of the head coach of the highest importance, and 96% rated this item a 4 or higher.

For item A18, 'Pro Football Opportunities', 6 or 24% rated a 1, 2 or 8% rated a 2, 8 or 32% rated a 3, 3 or 12% rated a 4, 0 or 0% rated a 5, and 6 or 24% rated a 6. The data shows that 32% rated this item a 3, and 64% rated pro football opportunities as a 1,2, or 3.

For item A19, 'Scholarship Opportunities', 4 or 16% rated a 1, 2 or 8% rated a 2, 3 or 12% rated a 3, 7 or 28% rated a 4, 4 or 16% rated a 5, and 5 or 20% rated a 6.

For item A20, 'Size of School', 0 or 0% rated a 1, 2 or 8% rated a 2, 4 or 16% rated a 3, 6 or 24% rated a 4, 8 or 32% rated a 5, and 5 or 20% rated a 6.

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation for choice items A01-A20. The mean equals the sum of the responders rating, divided by the number of responses 25. The mean describes the central location of the data, and the standard deviation describes the spread of the data. A large standard deviation indicates that the data is spread far from the mean and a small standard deviation indicates that the data is clustered near the mean.

Table 3

*Level of Influence on Choice*

Choice Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
A01. Academic Reputation	4.48	1.122
A02. Advice from Family and Friends	4.52	1.085
A03. Appearance of Campus	4.40	1.225
A04. Athletic Facilities	4.84	1.028
A05. Athletic Tradition	4.44	0.917
A06. Availability of Desired Major	5.28	0.936
A07. Campus Social Life	4.36	1.254
A08. Conference Affiliation	4.08	1.498
A09. Cost of Tuition	4.24	1.665
A10. Financial Aid Opportunities	3.92	1.631
A11. Future Career Opportunities	5.28	0.792
A12. Graduation Rate of Players	4.12	1.481
A13. High School Coaches Advice	3.80	1.528
A14. Honesty of Coaching Staff	5.12	1.166
A15. Location of School	4.52	1.327
A16. Opportunity to Play Early	4.68	1.435
A17. Personality of Head coach	5.20	1.155
A18. Pro Football Opportunities	3.28	1.838
A19. Scholarship Opportunities	3.80	1.708
A20. Size of School	4.40	1.225

To better understand the mean data table 4 shows the choice items ranked by mean from highest to lowest. A06, 'Availability of Desired Major' and A11, 'Future Career Opportunities' ranked the highest with a mean of 5.28 and A17, 'Personality of Head Coach' and A14, 'Honesty of Coaching Staff' also both having a mean above 5. Throughout the list significant differences are shown between means.

Table 4

*Choice items ranked by mean*

Choice Item :	Mean
A06. Availability of Desired Major	5.28
A11. Future Career Opportunities	5.28
A17. Personality of Head coach	5.20
A14. Honesty of Coaching Staff	5.12
A04. Athletic Facilities	4.84
A16. Opportunity to Play Early	4.68
A02. Advice from Family and Friends	4.52
A15. Location of School	4.52
A01. Academic Reputation	4.48
A05. Athletic Tradition	4.44
A03. Appearance of Campus	4.40
A20. Size of School	4.40
A07. Campus Social Life	4.36
A09. Cost of Tuition	4.24
A12. Graduation Rate of Players	4.12
A08. Conference Affiliation	4.08
A10. Financial Aid Opportunities	3.92
A13. High School Coaches Advice	3.80
A19. Scholarship Opportunities	3.80
A18. Pro Football Opportunities	3.28

Table 5 shows the standard deviation listed in ranking order from the lowest standard deviation, or items that show a high consensus. A11, 'Future Career Opportunities' has a very low standard deviation of .792. Items A05, 'Athletic Tradition' and A06, 'Availability of Desired Major' show a standard deviation below 1.00. The standard deviation for all items A01-A20 is below a 2.00, which shows a relatively strong consensus amongst the respondents.

Table 5

*Choice items ranked by standard deviation*

Choice Item:	Standard Deviation
A11. Future Career Opportunities	0.792
A05. Athletic Tradition	0.917
A06. Availability of Desired Major	0.936
A04. Athletic Facilities	1.028
A02. Advice from Family and Friends	1.085
A01. Academic Reputation	1.122
A17. Personality of Head coach	1.155
A14. Honesty of Coaching Staff	1.166
A03. Appearance of Campus	1.225
A20. Size of School	1.225
A07. Campus Social Life	1.254
A15. Location of School	1.327
A16. Opportunity to Play Early	1.435
A12. Graduation Rate of Players	1.481
A08. Conference Affiliation	1.498
A13. High School Coaches Advice	1.528
A10. Financial Aid Opportunities	1.631
A09. Cost of Tuition	1.665
A19. Scholarship Opportunities	1.708
A18. Pro Football Opportunities	1.838

Section three of the survey instrument asked respondents to rate different aspects of a campus visit. A total of 11 aspects were listed (B01-B11) and a 6 point Likert scale was used for the rating process. Respondents were asked to complete this section only if they had been on a campus visit. Of the 25 total respondents, 24 completed section three. Table 6 identifies the frequency of response for each visit aspect (B01-B11).



Aspect B04, 'Interaction with Team Members', 0 or 0% rated a 1, 0 or 0% rated a 2, 1 or 4% rated a 3, 4 or 17% rated a 4, 9 or 38% rated a 5, and 10 or 42% rated a 6. The data reveals that interaction with team members was rated at the highest level by 42% of respondents and 80% of the respondents rated this aspect as a 5 or 6.

Aspect B05, 'Meeting with Academic Advisor', 0 or 0% rated a 1, 0 or 0% rated a 2, 1 or 4% rated a 3, 12 or 52% rated a 4, 5 or 21% rated a 5, and 6 or 25% rated a 6.

Aspect B06, 'Meeting with Faculty in Your Major', 0 or 0% rated a 1, 0 or 0% rated a 2, 4 or 17% rated a 3, 6 or 25% rated a 4, 9 or 38% rated 5, and 5 or 21% rated 6.

Aspect B07, 'Meeting with Strength Coach', 0 or 0% rated a 1, 0 or 0% rated a 2, 6 or 25% rated a 3, 6 or 25% rated a 4, 7 or 29% rated a 5, and 5 or 21% rated a 6.

Aspect B08, 'One-on-One Meeting with Head Coach', 1 or 4% rated a 1, 0 or 0% rated a 2, 0 or 0% rated a 3, 4 or 1% rated a 4, 5 or 21% rated a 5, and 14 or 58% rated a 6. The data shows the 58% of the respondents rated a one-on-one meeting with the head coach at the highest level.

Aspect B09, 'Tour of Campus', 0 or 0% rated a 1, 0 or 0% rated a 2, 1 or 4% rated a 3, 7 or 29% rated a 4, 10 or 42% rated a 5, and 6 or 25% rated a 6.

Aspect B10, 'Tour of Football Facilities', 0 or 0% rated a 1, 0 or 0% rated a 2, 1 or 4% rated a 3, 3 or 13% rated a 4, 11 or 46% rated a 5, and 9 or 38% rated a 6. The data shows that 46% of respondents rated the Tour of Football Facilities as a 5, and 84% as a 5 or 6.

Aspect B11, 'Visiting Facilities Related to your Major', 0 or 0% rated a 1, 0 or 0% rated a 2, 4 or 17% rated a 3, 5 or 21% rated a 4, 8 or 33% rated a 5, and 7 or 29% rated a 6.

Table 7 shows the mean and standard deviation of the responses related to section three of the survey instrument. This section measured the level of importance for each college visit aspect.

Table 7

*Importance of Campus Visit Aspects*

Visit Aspect	Mean	Standard Deviation
B01. Viewing Dormitories	3.96	1.398
B02. Experiencing the Social Life of the College	4.29	1.197
B03. Interaction with Coaching Staff	5.29	0.806
B04. Interaction with Team Members	5.17	0.868
B05. Meeting with Academic Advisor	4.67	0.917
B06. Meeting with Faculty in Your Major	4.63	1.013
B07. Meeting with Strength Coach	4.46	1.103
B08. One-on-One Meeting with Head Coach	5.25	1.189
B09. Tour of Campus	4.88	0.850
B10. Tour of Football Facilities	5.17	0.816
B11. Visiting Facilities Related to Your Major	4.75	1.073

For a better review of this data, table 8 shows campus visit aspects (B01-B11) in ranking order by 'mean'. B03, 'Interaction with the Coaching Staff' and B08, a 'One-on-One Meeting with Head Coach' were rated the highest with means above 5.25. B10, 'Tour of Football Facilities', and B04, 'Interaction with Team Members' both had means of 5.17 ranking them amongst the most important, with the next highest mean at 4.88. Table 8 shows that the means of campus visit aspects did show significant differences.

Table 8

*Campus visit aspects ranked by mean*

Visit Aspect:	Mean
B03. Interaction with Coaching Staff	5.29
B08. One-on-One Meeting with Head Coach	5.25
B04. Interaction with Team Members	5.17
B10. Tour of Football Facilities	5.17
B09. Tour of Campus	4.88
B11. Visiting Facilities Related to Your Major	4.75
B05. Meeting with Academic Advisor	4.67
B06. Meeting with Faculty in Your Major	4.63
B07. Meeting with Strength Coach	4.46
B02. Experiencing the Social Life of the College	4.29
B01. Viewing Dormitories	3.96

To show the consensus among respondents table 9 shows the campus visit aspects (B01-B11) listed in order by 'standard deviation'. As shown in the list the standard deviation for all aspects is lower than a 1.4. B03, 'Interaction with Coaching Staff' has the lowest standard deviation with .806. B10, 'Tour of Football Facilities' also had a high consensus rate with a standard deviation of .816. Although B08, 'One-on-One Meeting with Head Coach' posted one of the highest means, the standard deviation was a 1.189.

Table 9

*Campus visit aspects ranked by standard deviation*

Visit Aspect:	Standard Deviation
B03. Interaction with Coaching Staff	0.806
B10. Tour of Football Facilities	0.816
B09. Tour of Campus	0.850
B04. Interaction with Team Members	0.868
B05. Meeting with Academic Advisor	0.917
B06. Meeting with Faculty in Your Major	1.013
B11. Visiting Facilities Related to Your Major	1.073
B07. Meeting with Strength Coach	1.103
B08. One-on-One Meeting with Head Coach	1.189
B02. Experiencing the Social Life of the College	1.197
B01. Viewing Dormitories	1.398

To find the differences between respondents from high school divisions, a t-test was performed. The high school divisions were split up into two categories, big divisions and small divisions. Big divisions included Wisconsin division 1 and 2. Small divisions included Wisconsin divisions 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. The divisions were split into two groups based upon enrolment amongst the divisions. Divisions 1 and 2 combined have a close enrollment to the sum of divisions 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. The number of respondents for the big divisions was 10 and the number of respondents in the small divisions was 14, with one non respondent.

Table 10 shows a cross tabulation for big and small divisions relating to the survey instrument items (A01-A20). The mean and standard deviation are listed for both big and small divisions for each choice item. A two tailed significance test (Sig. test) was also done to find any choice items that have significant statistical differences in their mean. Typical data analysis relies on a Sig. value of .05 to determine significance. Due to the small sample of this study a Sig. value of .1 will be used to determine significant statistical differences. Table 10 uses an (\*) to identify means that held a Sig. value of .1 or less.

Table 10

*Divisional Cross Tabulation for Choice Items*\* *Sig. Value of < .1*

Choice Item	Division	Mean	Standard Deviation
A01. Academic Reputation	big	4.30	0.949
	small	4.57	1.284
A02. Advice from Family and Friends	big	4.40	1.174
	small	4.64	1.082
A03. Appearance of Campus	big	4.60	1.265
	small	4.29	1.267
A04. Athletic Facilities	big	5.10	0.876
	small	4.71	1.139
A05. Athletic Tradition	big	4.70	1.160
	small	4.29	0.726
A06. Availability of Desired Major	big	5.60	0.699
	small	5.14	1.027
A07. Campus Social Life	big	4.50	1.269
	small	4.29	1.326
A08. Conference Affiliation	big	4.40	1.265
	small	3.86	1.703
A09. Cost of Tuition	big	4.10	1.729
	small	4.36	1.737
A10. Financial Aid Opportunities	big	3.80	1.687
	small	4.07	1.685
A11. Future Career Opportunities	big	5.10	0.876
	small	5.43	0.756
A12. Graduation Rate of Players	big	*4.70	1.494
	small	*3.71	1.437
A13. High School Coaches Advice	big	*4.50	1.716
	small	*3.29	1.267
A14. Honesty of Coaching Staff	big	5.40	0.843
	small	5.00	1.359
A15. Location of School	big	4.80	1.317
	small	4.43	1.342
A16. Opportunity to Play Early	big	4.40	1.430
	small	4.93	1.492
A17. Personality of Head coach	big	5.40	0.699
	small	5.07	1.439
A18. Pro Football Opportunities	big	3.30	1.767
	small	3.29	2.016
A19. Scholarship Opportunities	big	*4.80	1.476
	small	*3.14	1.610
A20. Size of School	big	4.80	1.135
	small	4.14	1.292

Throughout the cross tabulation table, big divisions showed a higher mean value for 13 choice items, while small divisions showed a higher mean value for 7 items. Only three items showed to have a Sig. value of less than .1, which is deemed significant statistical difference for this study. A12, 'Graduation Rate of Players', has a big division mean of 4.70 while small divisions only gave it a mean of 3.71 leading to a Sig. value of .101. A13, 'High School Coaches Advice', has a big division mean of 4.50 and a small division mean of 3.29 giving this item a Sig. value of .058. A19, 'Scholarship Opportunities', has a big division mean of 4.80 and a small division mean of 3.14 giving this item a Sig. value of .017. Big divisions have a lower standard deviation for 13 of the choice items, while small divisions showed a lower standard deviation 7 times.

Table 11 shows a cross tabulation for big and small divisions relating to the survey instrument items (B01-B11) aspects of a college visit. The mean and standard deviation are listed for both big and small divisions for each choice item. A two tailed Sig. test was also done to find any choice items that have significant statistical differences in their mean. Table 11 will use an (\*) to identify means that held a Sig. value of .1 or less.

Table 11

*Divisional Cross Tabulation of Visit Aspect*\* *Sig. Value of < .1*

Visit Aspect	Division	Mean	Standard Deviation
B01. Viewing Dormitories	big	4.11	1.616
	small	3.86	1.351
B02. Experiencing the Social Life of the College	big	4.44	1.014
	small	4.29	1.326
B03. Interaction with Coaching Staff	big	5.44	0.527
	small	5.29	0.914
B04. Interaction with Team Members	big	5.33	0.707
	small	5.14	0.949
B05. Meeting with Academic Advisor	big	*4.22	0.833
	small	*5.00	0.877
B06. Meeting with Faculty in Your Major	big	*4.22	1.093
	small	*4.93	0.917
B07. Meeting with Strength Coach	big	4.44	1.130
	small	4.57	1.089
B08. One-on-One Meeting with Head Coach	big	5.44	0.726
	small	5.21	1.424
B09. Tour of Campus	big	4.89	0.928
	small	4.93	0.829
B10. Tour of Football Facilities	big	5.44	0.527
	small	5.07	0.917
B11. Visiting Facilities Related to your Major	big	*4.33	1.000
	small	*5.07	1.072

The cross tabulation table data shows that big divisions had a higher mean value for 6 choice items, while small divisions showed a higher mean value for 5 items. Three items showed to have a Sig. value near .1. B05, 'Meeting with Academic Advisor', has a big division mean of 4.22 while small divisions have a mean of 5.00 leading to a Sig. value of .046. B06, 'Meeting with Faculty in Your Major', has a big division mean of 4.22 and a small division mean of 4.93 giving this aspect a Sig. value of .109. B11, 'Visiting Facilities Related to your Major', has a big division mean of 4.33 and a small division mean of 5.07 giving this aspect a Sig. value of .110.

Big divisions have a lower standard deviation for 8 of the choice items, while small divisions showed a lower standard deviation 3 times.

In section two of the instrument, items (A01-A20), factors that influence choice of college were grouped into six categories. The choice items were not grouped together on the instrument, nor were the respondents made aware of the different categories. Categories included: academic, athletic, coaches, financial, geographic, and personal.

The academic category included choice items A01, 'Academic Reputation', A06, 'Availability of Desired Major', and A12, 'Graduation Rate of Players'. The group factor mean is 4.62.

Table 12

*Academic Factors*

Choice Item: Academic	Mean	Standard Deviation
A01. Academic Reputation	4.48	1.122
A06. Availability of Desired Major	5.28	0.936
A12. Graduation Rate of Players	4.12	1.481
<i>Average for Academic Factors</i>	4.62	0.806

The athletic category included choice items A04, 'Athletic Facilities', A05, 'Athletic Tradition', and A08, 'Conference Affiliation', A16, 'Opportunity to Play Early', A18, 'Pro Football Opportunities'. The group factor mean is 4.26.

Table 13

*Athletic Factors*

Choice Item: Athletic	Mean	Standard Deviation
A04. Athletic Facilities	4.84	1.028
A05. Athletic Tradition	4.44	0.917
A08. Conference Affiliation	4.08	1.498
A16. Opportunity to Play Early	4.68	1.435
A18. Pro Football Opportunities	3.28	1.838
<i>Average for Athletic Factors</i>	4.26	0.972

The coaches' category included choice items A14, 'Honesty of Coaching Staff', A17, 'Personality of Head Coach. The coaches' category has the highest group factor mean of 5.16.

Table 14

*Coaching Factors*

Choice Item: Coaches	Mean	Standard Deviation
A14. Honesty of Coaching Staff	5.12	1.166
A17. Personality of Head Coach	5.20	1.155
<i>Average for Coach Factors</i>	5.16	1.077

The financial category included choice items A09, 'Cost of Tuition', A10, 'Financial Aid Opportunities', and A11, 'Future Career Opportunities', A19, 'Scholarship Opportunities'. The group factor mean is 4.31.

Table 15

*Financial Factors*

Choice Item: Financial	Mean	Standard Deviation
A09. Cost of Tuition	4.24	1.665
A10. Financial Aid Opportunities	3.92	1.631
A11. Future Career Opportunities	5.28	0.792
A19. Scholarship Opportunities	3.80	1.708
<i>Average for Athletic Factors</i>	4.31	1.114

The geographic category included choice items A03, 'Appearance of Campus', A07, 'Campus Social Life', A15, 'Location of School', A20, 'Size of School. The group factor mean is 4.40.

Table 16

*Geographic Factors*

Choice Item: Geographic	Mean	Standard Deviation
A03. Appearance of Campus	4.40	1.225
A07. Campus Social Life	4.36	1.254
A15. Location of School	4.52	1.327
A20. Size of School	4.40	1.225
<i>Average for Athletic Factors</i>	4.42	0.806

The personal category included choice items A02, 'Advice from Family and Friends', A13, 'High School Coaches Advice'. The group factor mean was the lowest of all the groups with 4.40.

Table 17

*Personal Factors*

Choice Item: Personal	Mean	Standard Deviation
A02. Advice from Family and Friends	4.52	1.085
A13. High School Coaches Advice	3.80	1.528
<i>Average for Athletic Factors</i>	4.16	0.932

Table 18 shows a bar graph of the group factor means. Coaches ranked most important group with a mean of 5.16. This group did stand out from the other groupings and is the one group that showed to have a significant statistical difference ranking a half point above the next grouping. Academic factors ranked second with a group factor mean of 4.62. Geographic factors came in third with a mean of 4.42. Financial and athletic factors came in very close together with financial factors having a mean of 4.31 and the athletic group factor mean at 4.26. Personal factors rank last with a mean of 4.16 but still within a half point of most of the other groupings.

Table 18

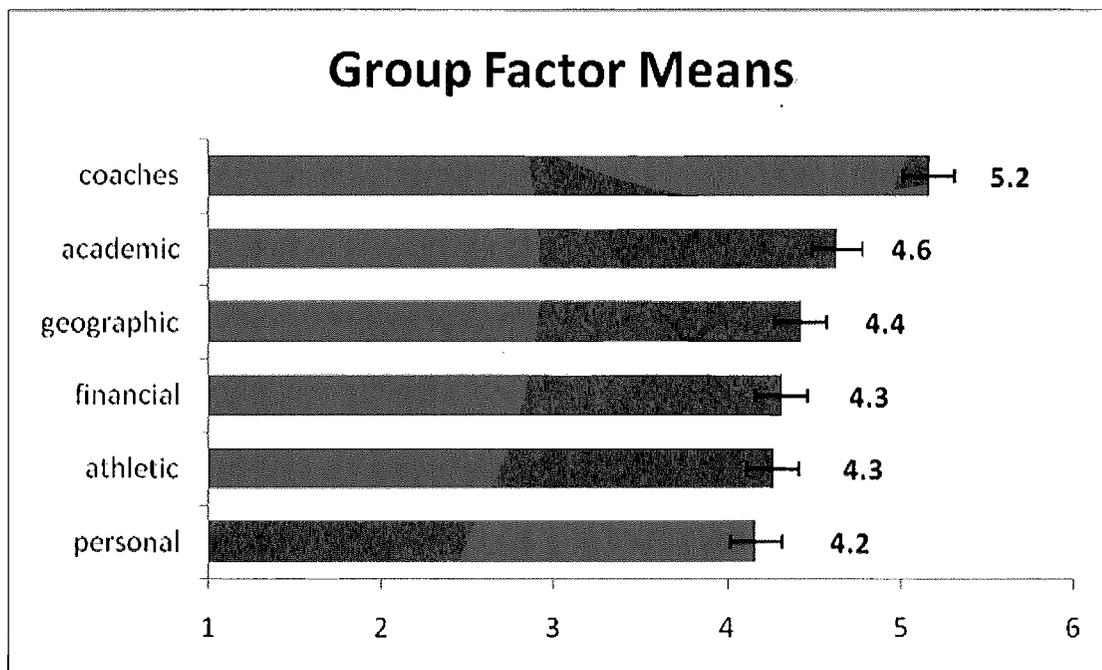
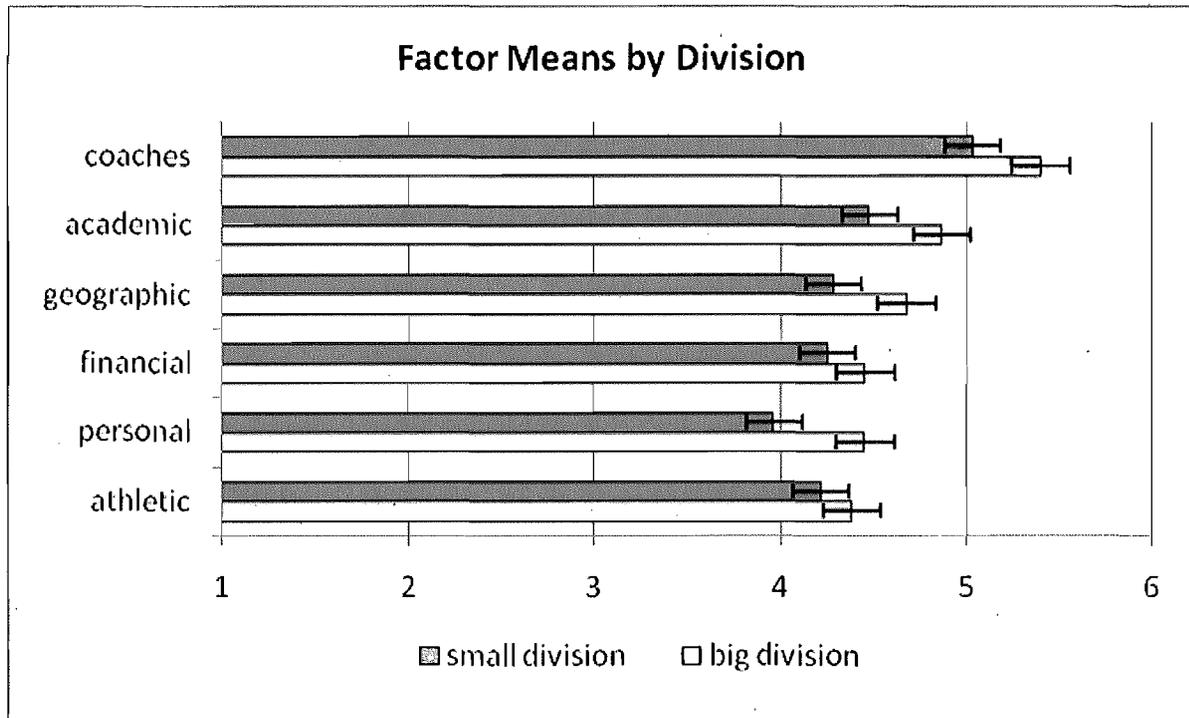
*Group Factor Means*

Table 19 shows a bar graph of the cross tabulation between big and small divisions group factor means. The data shows that respondents from big divisions did not rate each choice item higher than respondents from small divisions. However, when it came to the group mean factors, big divisions ranked each group higher than small divisions. Coaches were ranked the highest by both divisions, big divisions rating higher than small divisions. Both divisions rated “financial” and “athletic” at similar levels. Big divisions rated athletic factors as the least important, while small divisions rated personal factors least important. Personal factors showed a half point difference between big and small divisions; this is the one group factor mean that may show a significant statistical difference between big and small divisions.

Table 19

*Cross tabulation of Group Factor Means*



This chapter documented the major findings of this study, which assessed the influence that different factors had on high school football players choice of college and the different aspects of a college visit that they felt to be important. The data analyzed survey instrument returns from 25 respondents. The data was tallied using Statistical Program for Social Sciences .15 (SPSS .15) Analysis on the data included frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, standard deviation, and cross tabulations. Also independent T-Tests were used to determine the correlations between the respondents from big and small divisions. Two tailed sig. test were also used to determine the level of significance in differences between the divisions. Lastly, group factor means were found to see if categorized choice items such as, academic, athletic, coaches, financial, geographic, or personal factors were more influential that others.

## Chapter V: Discussion

### *Summary*

This study looked at the recruitment of high school football players in Wisconsin and the most important factors they consider while selecting a college. There has not been a substantial amount of studies conducted on students' choice of college. Even fewer studies have been conducted on choice of college for athletes, and no recent studies have focused particularly on Wisconsin high school football players. The literature suggested that this may be caused by fact that enrollments were growing in the past years and administrators have been more concerned with research on college selection rather than choice of college. Through the literature it was found that the decision to choose the right school can be difficult for any incoming freshman, and even more difficult for a student athlete. Research projects also showed the numerous factors that influence choice of college. These factors from the literature were the foundation for the development of the study. The researcher used the items from the literature to develop the instrument. 25 Wisconsin high school football players responded and the data was analyzed. Findings showed that many factors have high levels of influence on the respondents and that respondents from big schools may be influenced differently than respondents from smaller high schools. The findings from this study will be helpful in aiding further research as well as football programs.

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Identify the most important factors of college choice among top Wisconsin football recruits.
2. Identify the most important aspects of a campus visit among top Wisconsin football recruits.

3. Determine if there are significant differences between recruits from large schools and small schools in choice factors for college selection.

A survey questionnaire was used to collect data for this study. Following the objectives of the study, the instrument encompassed three sections. Section (1) only had one demographic question to collect data on the size of the high school from which the participant came from. Section 2 focused on collecting data on thirty key choice factors for high school football players that showed importance throughout the literature. Section 3 of the survey instrument collected data only from the high school football players that had been on a campus visit. The questions asked the respondents to rate what items they felt to be the most important aspects of a campus visit.

The target population for the study was defined by the following characteristics: (1) high school football players in the state of Wisconsin, (2) seniors in high school, (3) recognized by Collegiate Sports Data as a potential recruit. The total size of the target population was 886 recruits. A random sample of 200 was used for the study. Of the 200 survey instruments mailed out, 25 were returned or 12.5%. Data was tallied using (SPSS). Analysis on the data included frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, standard deviation, and cross tabulations. Also independent T-Tests were used to determine the correlations between the respondents from big and small divisions.

The limitations of this study are:

1. The results of this study are limited to recruits in the state of Wisconsin as determined by Collegiate Sports Data. This company gathers their information directly from the high school coaches by asking them who on their team could potentially play at the next level.

Although this is not the best way of determining the top recruits in the state, it is the most widely used.

2. There are countless factors that play a role in choice of college. Not all factors could be represented in the survey. The factors were chosen based upon the literature and surveys used in different studies.
3. The instrument used to collect data in this study relied solely on quantitative data. This was helpful in the determining which factors are important, but could not answer why the respondents scored one factor higher than another.

### *Conclusions*

Findings of this study are centered on the four research objectives. Objective 1 was to identify the most important factors of college choice among top Wisconsin football recruits. The data showed that of the twenty choice items used, the respondents did rank certain items significantly higher than others. The top two ranked items were “Availability of Desired Major” and “Future Career Opportunities”. Both of these factors were rated as a 5.28 and seem to show that the respondents were concerned with their career path and how a university can help them achieve their goals. The next two top ranked items were the “Personality of Head Coach” and “Honesty of Coaching Staff” which both were rated above a 5.10. Again these two items seem to have a relation to each other and show that the respondents find it highly important that they relate well to the coaching staff at the university. Of these top four items all were found to be amongst the top ranked items of other studies as well. This data seems to support the literature in saying that football prospects are very concerned with how they will develop through their college experience and what kind of people they will learn from.

“Athletic Facilities” and “Opportunity to Play Early” ranked above a 4.6 amongst the top of the choice factors. Again both of these factors also ranked high in previous studies listed in the literature. Both of these factors are strictly related to football, pertaining to where and when an athlete will have an opportunity to play. The lowest rated factors were “Pro Football Opportunities” and “Scholarship Opportunities”. These factors were not ranked at the bottom of any of the research in the literature review. Looking closer at the studies that included these factors, each targeted the top athletes across the country. These are typically athletes that expect to receive scholarships and hopefully find their way into the NFL. This study surveyed all potential recruits and it is unknown to whether the respondents were “scholarship type athletes”. It is also unknown if Wisconsin high school football players give less importance to scholarships because of the lack of scholarship schools in the state. This study could lead to further research on this subject.

Objective 2 was to identify the most important factors of a campus visits. The top two rated aspects of a college visit were the “Interaction with Coaching Staff” at 5.29 and “One-on-One Meeting with Head Coach” at 5.25. Coaches again rank high as they did in factors that influenced choice. Some of the literature supports this data; many coaches have stated that every school has buildings made of brick and mortar, some nicer than others, but it is the people that can make the difference in the recruiting process. With ratings of 5.17, “Interaction with Team Members” and “Tour of Football Facilities” was next atop the list of college visit aspects. For a recruit, meeting with potential team members is very important and again this shows the importance of the people at the university. As in the literature, touring athletic facilities ranks above a tour of the rest of campus. The data supports other studies in that when on a campus visit, football players give higher importance to the athletic aspects than the academic aspects.

This shows a negative correlation between the importance of the aspects of a campus visit and the factors that influence choice of school. Although academic factors are at the highest level of importance when choosing a school, student athletes don't seem to have a high level interest in seeing facilities relating to their major, nor meeting with academic advisors or faculty in their area of studies. Further down the list of college visit aspects is "Experiencing the Social Life of the College" and Viewing Dormitories". Both of these aspects are rated significantly lower than the rest of the college visit aspects and both relate to life on campus. Although we know through the literature that life on campus is important to recruits, again it does not seem to be something that they expect to experience during their visit.

Objective 3 was to determine whether there is any significant difference in the ratings from recruits attending big schools or small schools. Three factors of influence showed significant differences between those recruits from large schools versus those from small schools. "High School Coaches Advice" was seen to be more important to recruits from large schools. "Scholarship Opportunities" also were rated higher by recruits from large schools, and the "Graduation Rate of Player" again more important to those from larger schools. The meaning behind this data is hard to define, as the researcher was not able to find literature or other studies on this topic. The literature does speak of how students from larger schools have a higher chance of being exposed to many other students who have gone through the college choice process.

Three campus visit aspects also showed significant rating differences between recruits from large and small schools. Recruits from small schools rated three aspects significantly higher; "Visiting Facilities Related to your Major", Meeting with Academic Advisor" and "Meeting with Faculty in your Major". This data suggests that students from smaller school find it more important to meet with the people who will be involved in their academic career and see

the academic facilities. Again the reasons behind these differences are unclear, but the data itself can still be very useful.

Objective 4 categorized the factors that influence choice of college into six categories: coaches, academic, geographic, financial, athletic and personal. Only the “coaches” category had statistical significance. This coincides with the literature and the data collected in both sections of this study. High school football recruits are influenced by the coach recruiting them, the head coach and the rest of the staff when they come to visit. Academic factors were the second most influential group followed by geographic factors, financial factors, athletic factors and personal factors. The researcher did look at one other study that used similar groupings. In that study coaches did rank first but were followed by athletic factors. In this study the “coaches” factor stood out and the rest of the grouping were so closely rated that there really is no difference.

### *Recommendations*

The research indicates that Wisconsin’s high school football players are influenced by particular factors within a football program and while on their college visit. The information collected in this study can help college football coaches and recruiting coordinators improve their recruiting strategies and campus visits. The following recommendations were made based upon the information collected in this study.

1. The research tells us that there are fixed college characteristics that football programs are tied to. Some of these characteristics can be influenced by football programs over time. The data shows that things such as availability of desired major and athletic facilities are important to recruits. Although neither of these things can be improved immediately, they can be improved on over time. As a coach or athletic

administrator it important to work with the university to improve university characteristics that can help improve recruiting efforts for your program.

2. Educate the coaching staff on the college choice process for high school football players. Recruits go through the process of determining whether to attend college, determine whether to pursue college athletics, develop preliminary college values, search for an appropriate school, develop a choice set, engage in courtship activities, and finally commit to a decision. Recruiting coaches should try to determine which part of this process each recruit is in and what he can do to help the recruit through this process.
3. Understand that there are many factors that influence choice. This study incorporated 20 factors that influence choice, however the literature touched on many more factors. It is important for a recruiting coach to concentrate on the most important factors while keeping in mind that every recruit is influenced differently.
4. Educate staff about your university's majors. The data indicates that the availability of desired major is the very important to recruits. As coaches we must be able to answer questions about major availability. Take the time to meet with admissions staff or even program directors at your school. Understand the career paths that can be take from each major, which programs your university offers that others don't, or which programs your university specializes in.
5. Communicate the importance of developing the person and the player. The data shows that future career opportunities are highly important to recruits. Coaches should share how their university and football program can help provide them with opportunities in their future. We all know that very few college football players make a long term profession out of football, so beyond developing them as players on the field, share how

your program can help develop your players in becoming successful in anything they pursue.

6. Make your head coach a “bigger than life” character. As shown by the data and the literature, recruits are highly influence by the head coach of a program. Big name coaches draw in the top recruits simply by being big name coaches.
7. Be honest of with your recruits. Results from the survey show that it is very important for coaches to be honest with recruits. Dishonesty with recruits will either become evident during the recruitment process or after the recruit has committed. Either way dishonesty will hurt your recruiting efforts.
8. Interact with your recruits on visit days. This seems obvious but many times coaches pawn off recruits on student assistants, admissions staff, and other faculty for a majority of the day. Recruits are there to get to know the coaches and want to know what type of coaches they will be playing for. Don’t be afraid to let them get to know each coach’s philosophy.
9. Be at your best. The data shows that the people they meet while at the university are more influential than the facilities themselves. Make sure your staff is prepared and on the same page. Choose your best players to meet with recruits and inform them on your recruiting policies.

#### *Further Research*

1. Conduct a study on recruits across the nation. This study focused on only Wisconsin recruits because of the location of the researcher. A study similar to this project across the country would help a lager group of coaches and determine if recruits from different parts of the country are influenced by different factors.

2. Study if recruits intending to play college football at the different NCAA levels DI, DIIA, DII, DIII are influenced differently. This study looked at general Wisconsin recruits identified by Collegiate Sports Data. A study that determines how DI recruits differ from DIII recruits would be more specific for college coaches.
3. There are countless factors that play a role in choice of college. Not all factors could be included in this survey. Another study could be conducted to find the importance of additional factors.
4. The instrument used to collect data in this study relied solely on quantitative data. This was helpful in determining which factors are important, but could not answer why the respondents scored one factor higher than another. A qualitative study should be conducted to learn more about reasons why high school football players are influenced by certain factors.
5. Additional research should be conducted on high school football players with different demographics. This study briefly looked at players that came from different size schools, but did not have any conclusive data. Research with more demographic data could help coaches better understand the differences in the demographics of recruits.
6. Continued research should be conducted because of the changing times. As higher education transforms, economic conditions change, and government institutions change policies, the factors which influence choice will change. This study could not account for the major changes that have occurred in our economic conditions and the major changes in government policies in the past year.

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## Wisconsin Football Prospect Survey

1. What division does your high school football team play in?

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_ 6 \_\_\_\_\_ 7 \_\_\_\_\_

3. The following is a list of factors that may be influential in your decision to choose a college. Please rank the level of influence each of these factors have had on your college selection process by placing an X in the box.

Low <<<<<<>>>> High

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Academic Reputation						
Advice from Family and Friends						
Appearance of Campus						
Athletic Facilities						
Athletic Tradition						
Availability of Desired Major						
Campus Social Life						
Conference Affiliation						
Cost of Tuition						
Financial Aid Opportunities						
Future Career Opportunities						
Graduation Rate of Players						
High School Coaches Advice						
Honesty of Coaching Staff						
Location of School						
Opportunity to Play Early						
Personality of Head Coach						
Pro Football Opportunities						
Scholarship Opportunities						
Size of School						

**Over >>**

4. Have you been on a campus visit?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

If you answered **no** to question 4 do not complete question 5.

5. The following are different aspects of a campus visit. Please identify the level of importance of each campus visit aspect.

Low <<<<<<>>>>>> High

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Viewing Dormitories						
Experiencing the Social Life of the College						
Interaction with Coaching Staff						
Interaction with Team Members						
Meeting with Academic Advisor						
Meeting with Faculty in Your Major						
Meeting with Strength Coach						
One-on-One Meeting with Head Coach						
Tour of Campus						
Tour of Football Facilities						
Visiting Facilities Related to your Major						

Are there any other aspects of a college visit that you feel are highly important?

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**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please place this survey along with the attached consent form in the provided business reply envelope and return to any U.S. postal box. (no postage is necessary)**

## Appendix B: Consent to Participate

### Consent to Participate In UW-Stout Approved Research

*Identifying Key Factors of Choice of College among Wisconsin High School Football Players*

**Investigator:**

Travis Destache

UW-Stout Graduate Student

**Advisor:**

Dr. Steve Terry

Director of Physical Education

**Description:**

You have been identified by Collegiate Sports Data Inc. as a top football recruit in the state of Wisconsin. For this reason you have been selected to participate in this study by completing the following survey. This research project has been put together to identify the key factors that influence yourself, and other Wisconsin football players in selecting a college. Also, this study hopes to identify what you feel are the most important aspects of a campus visit.

**Risks and Benefits:**

There are little risks in participating in this study as you will remain anonymous and participation is voluntary. The researcher will be using the results of the study to assist college football coaches, recruiting coordinators, and football operation managers responsible for identifying the pressures and influences they need to consider when developing their recruiting policy. This study will also help determine what aspects of a campus visit are most important to recruits.

**Time Commitment and Payment:**

The accompanying survey will take approximately 10 minutes of your time. There is no monetary compensation for your time.

**Confidentiality:**

The study is completely anonymous. Names will not be included on any documents and this informed consent will not be kept with any of the other documents completed with this project.

**Right to Withdraw:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you. Should you choose to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, you may discontinue your participation at this time without incurring adverse consequences.

**IRB Approval:**

This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

**Investigator:**

Travis Destache  
715-232-5226  
destachet@uwstout.edu

**Advisor:**

Steve Terry  
715-232-2161  
terrys@uwstout.edu

**IRB Administrator:**

Sue Foxwell, Director, Research Services  
152 Vocational Rehabilitation Bldg.  
UW-Stout  
Menomonie, WI 54751  
715-232-2477  
foxwells@uwstout.edu

**If you are under the age of 18, you must have consent from a parent or guardian before completing this survey.**

**Parental Statement of Consent:**

*Please Check one:*

I give consent to allow my child to participate in this study

I do not give consent to allow my child to participate in this study

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of parent or guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Participant Statement of Consent:**

I understand my rights as a participant, and by signing the blank below I agree to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix C: IRB Approval Letter

**Date:** June 3, 2009

**To:** **Travis Destache**

**From:** Sue Foxwell, Research Administrator and Human Protections Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB)

**Subject:** **Protection of Human Subjects**

Your project, "**Identifying Key Factors of Choice of College among Wisconsin High School Football Players,**" has been approved by the IRB through the expedited review process. The measures you have taken to protect human subjects are adequate to protect everyone involved, including subjects and researchers.

**Please copy and paste the following message to the top of your survey form before dissemination:**

<p><b>This research has been approved by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46.</b></p>
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This project is approved through February 27, 2009. Modifications to this approved protocol need to be approved by the IRB. Research not completed by this date must be submitted again outlining changes, expansions, etc. Federal guidelines require annual review and approval by the IRB.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and best wishes with your project.

**\*NOTE: This is the only notice you will receive – no paper copy will be sent.**

