

*Becoming a "Real University": A Content Analysis of Football Feasibility  
Studies Conducting for Public Universities in Transition*  
Darren Kelly, University of Texas at Austin

Abstract

In the midst of an economic crisis leading to extensive cuts in college athletics, at least 38 colleges in the past five years have either added or have plans to add football to their athletic programs. Of interest are schools that have traditionally been known as "commuter universities." In response to increased competition from other colleges, many of these schools are adding football as a part of a larger strategic vision for creating a better "college product." Using both a resource-based view (RBV) (Barney, 1991), and institutional theory perspectives (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), this study seeks to understand the adopted strategic perspective and the benefits sought by universities adding football to their campus. This study employed a content analysis methodology (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 2004) using publically available football feasibility studies from six NCAA Division I universities who had added (or had plans to add) football over the past five years. Results indicate that football is being positioned as a way to create a sense of community and to reduce a perceived competitive disadvantage, most similar to institutional theory. Implications of such practice include a narrowing of the strategies employed to reach students and/or create community.