

## ***EFFECTS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS CRISES ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OF NCAA DIVISION I ATHLETIC DEPARTMENTS***

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There is a widely-held axiom in athletics that any publicity is good publicity. However, there have been several cases in NCAA Division I athletics where highly-publicized events have led to the downfall of entire athletic programs. For example, the NCAA's application of the "death penalty" to SMU in 1987 was one of the first cases where a program's achievement and fan base were essentially destroyed by committing major NCAA infractions (Mandel, 2007). Even though some institutions have suffered greatly in the wake of scandals, the number of reported major and secondary infractions has continued to grow each year (Wolverton, 2007). Further, there are several high-profile universities that have enjoyed recent on-field success despite committing major violations since 2004, including Alabama, Georgia Tech, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Oregon (LSDBi, 2009). It has been suggested that there is a growing level of public apathy in terms of various player-related scandals, due to fan perceptions of athletes as "dumb jocks" coupled with a long history of lack of NCAA intervention (Sperber, 2000). This perception could help explain the success of certain institutions despite committing major infractions.

While athletic scandals damage public perception and are excellent fodder for fans from rival institutions, it is uncertain from the literature as to whether public relations crises affect the bottom line of the athletic department. In this study, common scandals within NCAA Division I football programs (i.e. major/secondary infractions, coach/underclassmen departures, and negative coach/player off-field behavior) were examined to determine their influence on organizational effectiveness, based on the paradigm introduced by Putler and Wolfe (1999). The current investigation was also informed by the work of Rocha and Turner (2008) who used this model and found that coaches' extra-role behaviors had negligible effects on overall organizational effectiveness. The current study will assist athletic administrators in better understanding the tangible effects of public relations crises and highlights which types of scandals are most dangerous. Further, an institution's overall image can be tarnished by scandal in the athletic department (Toma, 2003), thus the results of this examination contain practical information and implications for university administrators that can extend campus-wide.