

## Introduction: Higher Education, Athletics, and Innovation in 2016 and Beyond

Welcome to the first issue of the *Journal of Higher Education Athletics & Innovation (JHEAI)*!

As a graduate student at the University of Southern California in the 1990's, I never could have dreamed that a journal like this one would ever exist. In the nineties, there was only one scholar that I knew of who was trained in **higher and post-secondary education** and who seriously examined the role of intercollegiate athletics in American higher education: Professor John Thelin. Douglas Toma was eventually added to the list to make a total of two scholars. Thelin's seminal book *Games College's Play (1996)* inspired me to keep pushing for higher education graduate programs to pay closer attention to athletics and allow those with fire in their belly on this topic to make a career out of the intersection of academics and athletics. This road has been a bumpy one, as the theory and practice of higher education and athletics in scholarly outlets have been limited. However, I wanted to share some of the wins at this point in the intellectual game and give props to those that have displayed great leadership in this movement that is long overdue. Colleagues and friends, if your name is not mentioned, it is solely because of space limitations.

Drs. Robin Hughes and James Satterfield started the Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education (JSSAE) in 2007, and this journal's impact has helped scholars from various academic disciplines publish and read about quality scholarship on sport and higher education. Dr. Eddie Comeaux and I started within American Educational Research Association's (AERA) Special Interest Group (SIG) for Research Focus on Education and Sport. While this SIG started with a wide circle of chairs and a handful of scholars sitting in them at our annual business meetings, it is rewarding to now see scholars sitting in the aisles during the multiple SIG paper and standing room only roundtable sessions. Dr. Jennifer Hoffman at the University of Washington was one of the scholars in those early SIG business meetings, as she has also helped establish the merger of higher education and intercollegiate athletics at the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), which is a major victory. Dr. Lydia Bell, currently employed in the NCAA's research department, has also contributed greatly to the SIG and was another one of the individuals at AERA during the first SIG business meetings. Drs. Ron Flowers, Anne Browning, Kristiana Navarro, Derek Van Rheenen, Siduri Haslerig, and Whitney Griffin have all contributed greatly to maintaining and enhancing the SIG in meaningful ways.

In 2011, Educational Researcher (ER) published the first paper on higher education and sport; that paper was written by Comeaux and Harrison. Thanks Eddie for bringing up the paper's idea during your doctoral studies at UCLA and making us stay with the idea for a student-athlete development model during your days at the University of Kentucky. These benchmarks and other victories have propelled us to the beginning of *JHEAI*. Intellectual cheers to everyone. Now, here is how the journal will roll in terms of the process.

All papers will go through the peer-review process in each of the two issues published during the academic calendar for *JHEAI*. For this first issue, I will explain how each section operates in order to encourage colleagues and doctoral students to consider this journal as a scholarly outlet for their work. We welcome scholarship from all over the world in the context of higher education and university athletics.

In terms of our first issue there are several thoughts of my own before turning to the authors who all contributed to issue number one. (Where are we seeing these innovations? In current media? In current events? In literature?) We see the innovation of African American quarterbacks at Louisville and Clemson to mention only a couple. Both these young men are intelligent, confident and good scholars in the classroom. Deshaun Watson specifically, graduated in less than three years and still has two years left of athletic eligibility. We also see a White running back and an African American head football coach at Stanford University. In terms of women's sports, I had the opportunity to attend the women's basketball championship game between Syracuse University and UCONN. I definitely thought about the higher graduation rates and academic success of female student-athletes in addition to the great athleticism and teamwork that I saw from the women ballers on the court. We also see the voices of LGBTQ finally being heard more in academe and society. There are many topics, issues, and successes when I think about higher education, athletics, and innovation. The next sections that follow describe what *JHEAI* is looking for in terms of content for each of the thematic categories.

One section is called *Autoethnography* as the personal narrative for scholarship is fundamental to connecting personal experiences to wider sociocultural contexts. The first paper is written by Professor Emeritus at Cal-Berkeley **Harry Edwards**, a long-time scholar-activist. His paper is very timely when we consider the pulse of America and American higher education climate issues across race relations, sport, higher education, and society.

The second paper is written by **Richard E. Lapchick**, another long-time scholar-activist and current chair of the DeVos Sport Business Management Program at the University of Central Florida in Orlando. Lapchick's story has been heard by many in academe and in society at public lectures. His story and personal narrative is important as scholars and practitioners continue to think through the intersection of scholarship and activism.

Many "talk about it" but both of these public intellectuals have *been about it* and helped shape and change the landscape of diversity and inclusion in the private and public sectors of higher education, sport organizations and societal entities.

Another section is called **General Peer-Review Articles** and has two papers included in this first issue. The first is by **Erienne A. Weight, Kristina M. Navarro, Landon Huffman, & Abbie Smith-Ryan** in an interesting paper about the health/wellness of college athlete--an area where we need more research and application. College athletes in this study demonstrated overall superior health and lower susceptibility to future metabolic risk factors than their active non-athlete classmates as demonstrated by a significantly lower body fat percentage despite having higher BMI values. Despite a lack of structured traditional education, it appears that college athletes are gaining knowledge and engaging in practices critical to holistic development. This paper explores the legitimacy of competitive athletics as a holistic educational endeavor as worthy of fulfilling the mission of higher American higher education.

The second paper in this section is by **Jacob Tingle** of Trinity College in San Antonio, Texas. Tingle examines organizational trust in collegiate athletic departments in a theoretical and empirical way. Tingle's paper has implications for not just higher education scholars, but also those academics in organization and management that think about sport in a serious way.

The next section is titled **Innovation** and this is a category where we hope scholars will help *JHEAI* move the needle when it comes to theory and practice. Specifically, in this section we are looking for new ideas and radical approaches to higher education and athletics that are

buttressed by theory, data and even activism if that is appropriate. **Sanethia Thomas** is a PhD student at the University of Florida, and her paper compels us to create a new category that is the merger of student-athlete or player development and technology.

The last section of peer-reviewed articles is titled **Research Note** and there is a solid contribution by **Scott J. Bukstein** at UCF. Bukstein is an instructor and director of the undergraduate sport business management program at UCF. Bukstein teaches several sport business courses and one of his specializations is the business of college sport. He is precipitating the conversation about the NCAA and higher education leaders and all of us concerned about the future of collegiate athletics on American campuses will benefit with this short, but impactful article.

The final section of the journal is dedicated for doctoral students and includes one book review. In the section called **Book Review(s)**, we attempt to gauge the perspectives of future scholars in terms of their take on scholarly books in the field of higher education and sport. The book by **Eddie Comeaux** is an important contribution when we think about higher education, athletics and innovation. UCF Higher Education and Policy Studies doctoral candidate **Dianna Lampitt** gives us a comprehensive overview of the book *Introduction to Intercollegiate Athletics*.

While these are the categories in the first issue of *JHEAI*, the journal is open to other categories. Some suggestions for scholars, doctoral students, etc. to submit include film reviews related to higher education and athletics, review of literatures, and categories not yet thought of.

Lastly, a big thanks to all of you out there that have or will contribute in the future to *JHEAI* becoming a viable outlet for research, theory and practice. I know the late Dr. Myles Brand of the NCAA would be proud that we have found another nugget that “shows the value of intercollegiate athletics in American higher education.”

*Acknowledgment: I would like to thank Erick Snyder for starting the journal at Oklahoma University with his contribution being to advance the original concept for the Journal of Higher Education Athletics, which I changed to include innovation in the title when I accepted the editorship in 2015.*

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