

WEAVER, ANTHONY G., Ph.D. Upward Reclassification of Intercollegiate Athletic Departments to Division I: A Case Study Approach. (2007)  
Directed by Dr. Gerald Ponder. 436pp

The purpose of this research was to describe the process of reclassifying an athletic department to Division I and its impact on the institution and its stakeholders. The study focused on the process of reclassification, the context in which the reclassification took place and a number of aspects (people, departments, facilities) that were altered during the organizational change. The relationship between intercollegiate athletic departments and the university, as well as personal relationships were also examined.

Two universities, University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) and Elon University, were chosen for case study analysis. Data were collected and analyzed using case study methodologies and an adapted model of Pettigrew's contextualist approach. Data from each institution were gathered using documents, archival records, semi-structured interviews, participant observations, physical artifacts, and direct observations. Analysis was completed based on the three constructs taken from Pettigrew's model: context, process, and content. Content analysis of all documents and interview transcripts revealed several themes.

Results indicate that although the context at each university was different, each university believed the reclassification would improve their institutional profile among competitive peer institutions. Each institution was also influenced by the athletic success of other institutions, which produced a belief that the upgrade would bring recognition to the institution. The process of the move to Division I was a complex progression

involving numerous internal and external constituents. Each institution worked within the detailed parameters established by the NCAA, as well as the institution's own procedures for completing the change. The study identified potential areas of change to the organization as a result of the move to Division I. These changes include better quality students and faculty, increased alumni support, university profile, and improved community relations; however, the impact of the reclassification on these organizational changes is difficult to determine. At both schools, the athletic product including student-athletes, coaches, and athletic facilities did change as a direct result of the reclassification.

The results of the study aid in gaining a better understanding of the resulting organizational change of the upward reclassification to Division I. This study represents an effort to appreciate the context in which transition occurred, the process of transitioning the athletic program to Division I, the rationale for the move, and the impact on the institution and its constituency. Findings from this study serve as a first step to gaining a better understanding of the impact of reclassification on organizational change of a university.

UPWARD RECLASSIFICATION OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETIC  
DEPARTMENTS TO DIVISION I:  
A CASE STUDY APPROACH

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to  
the faculty of The Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro  
2007

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APPROVAL PAGE

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Through the trials and tribulations of completing this research my committee has provided direction and inspiration. My special thanks go to Dr. Gerald Ponder, my committee chair. Your encouragement and support helped me a great deal through this project. Thank you also to Dr. Hal Walker, Dr. David Ayers, and Dr. Katherine Jamieson for serving on my committee. Each of you added assistance and support that helped guide me through the design, implementation, and completion of this dissertation. I was fortunate to have four committee members from varied backgrounds bring their expertise to this project. I respect and admire your work and thank you for your help.

I would also like to thank Dr. Becky Beal, Dr. Cindra Kamphoff, as well as Karen Murphy, and Adam Lowenfeld all of whom provided assistance during the pilot study, study design, data collection and analysis. A special thanks is also extended to the libraries at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Elon University archive departments.

Without the willingness of the participants at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Elon University to share their thoughts, this project would still be just a dream. Your insights, beliefs, and opinions about your experience of the reclassification made this dissertation a reality. Thank you for all that you did to make this dissertation possible.

I would like to offer my biggest thanks to my family. Thank you to my siblings, Anne, Jack, and Cathy (Shawn and the kids), for all of your support in every project I have ever undertaken, with this being the biggest. To all of the Haldemans, you were

each extremely important to my success and I thank you. To my dad, Jack, who always instilled the importance of education in everything I did. You have always been and will continue to be my role model in all that I do.

And of course, the four very special women in my life: Dr. Lauren Haldeman, my wife, best friend, and mentor. It is almost impossible to express my thanks to you, but please know that this would not have been possible without you. My two girls, Annelise and Amelia – I thank you for your patience and understanding and keeping me company during those late nights and early mornings at the computer. To my mom, Anne, gone but certainly not forgotten; you have given me the strength to accomplish anything. I regret not finishing by April, but I would not trade our time together. Thank you for your inspiration.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) membership ascension to Division I, the highest level of competition, is a tedious, complex, and expensive process that can impact both internal and external constituencies of an institution. The ultimate decision to reclassify from Division III or II to Division I will undoubtedly alter an institution's support of their athletic programs. Typically, this organizational change will cause on-campus distress regarding the increased commitment from the university, eventually shown in the forms of larger operational budgets, increased scholarships, more personnel, and state-of-the art facilities. External constituents, such as alumni, donors, and community leaders may also debate the reclassification citing that an overemphasis on athletics will harm the academic mission of the institution. Others may believe, however, that a move to Division I will bring much needed public recognition to all facets of the university.

On a regular basis, university administrators are required to make difficult decisions that impact the future of the institution. Administrators must respond to concerns from many institutional factions, such as faculty and staff, alumni, the local community and the student body. Now more than ever, concerns from the campus constituency regarding intercollegiate athletics and their proper place in higher education are a priority for top administrators. Given the increased popularity and the controversy

that surrounds intercollegiate athletics, examining the associations between the athletic department and the rest of the university is a timely issue. In particular, it is necessary to analyze the relationships occurring at institutions that have made this increased commitment to the athletic programs.

One way many universities have become more aggressive in trying to achieve a high level of athletic success is to reclassify their intercollegiate athletics programs to the highest level of competition, NCAA Division I. Due to the enormous investment of time, talent and treasure, a college or university should not enter into the reclassification process without understanding the impact such a move would have on the campus constituency (Schwarz, 1998).

Additional literature (Gerdy 2002; Sperber, 1990; Suggs, 2000) suggests that institutions are continuing to emphasize “big-time” intercollegiate athletic programs. However, little research has devoted attention to the impact reclassification has on all constituents, not just those directly associated with the athletic programs.

#### Definitions of Key Terms

It is important to have a thorough understanding of key terminology used throughout this paper. In order to better understand the reclassification process, the terms NCAA or National College Athletic Association have been defined, Division I extensively and Division II and III briefly. In addition clear definitions that are used in discussing the reclassification process, active and provisional membership, are provided for the reader.

NCAA - The National Collegiate Athletic Association – the governing body of intercollegiate athletics formed for the following purposes:

- ( a ) To initiate, stimulate and improve intercollegiate athletics programs for student-athletes and to promote and develop educational leadership, physical fitness, athletics excellence and athletics participation as a recreational pursuit;
- ( b ) To uphold the principle of institutional control of, and responsibility for, all intercollegiate sports in conformity with the constitution and bylaws of this Association;
- ( c ) To encourage its members to adopt eligibility rules to comply with satisfactory standards of scholarship, sportsmanship and amateurism;
- ( d ) To formulate, copyright and publish rules of play governing intercollegiate athletics;
- ( e ) To preserve intercollegiate athletics records;
- ( f ) To supervise the conduct of, and to establish eligibility standards for, regional and national athletics events under the auspices of this Association;
- ( g ) To cooperate with other amateur athletics organizations in promoting and conducting national and international athletics events;
- ( h ) To legislate, through bylaws or by resolutions of a Convention, upon any subject of general concern to the members related to the administration of intercollegiate athletics; and
- ( i ) To study in general all phases of competitive intercollegiate athletics and establish standards whereby the colleges and universities of the United States can

maintain their athletics programs on a high level (The 2004-05 NCAA Division I Manual, 2004, p.1).

Division I - Division I member institutions have to sponsor at least seven sports for men and seven for women (or six for men and eight for women) with two team sports for each gender. Each playing season has to be represented by each gender as well. There are contest and participant minimums for each sport, as well as scheduling criteria. For sports other than football and basketball, Division I schools must play 100% of the minimum number of contests against Division I opponents -- anything over the minimum number of games has to be 50% Division I. Men's and women's basketball teams have to play all but two games against Division I teams, for men, they must play 1/3 of all their contests in the home arena. Schools that have football are classified as Division I-A or I-AA. I-A football schools and are usually fairly elaborate programs. Division I-A teams have to meet minimum attendance requirements (17,000 people in attendance per home game, OR 20,000 average of all football games in the last four years or, 30,000 permanent seats in their stadium and average 17,000 per home game or 20,000 average of all football games in the last four years, OR be in a member conference in which at least six conference members sponsor football or more than half of football schools meet attendance criterion. Division I-AA teams do not need to meet minimum attendance requirements. Division I schools must meet minimum financial aid awards for their athletics program, and there are maximum

financial aid awards for each sport that a Division I school cannot exceed.

Division I schools that do not play scholarship football or choose not to have a football program are classified as Division I-AAA (NCAA, 2004a, p.5 )

Division II - Division II institutions have to sponsor at least four sports for men and four for women, with two team sports for each gender, and each playing season represented by each gender. There are contest and participant minimums for each sport, as well as scheduling criteria -- football and men's and women's basketball teams must play at least 50% of their games against Div. II or I-A or I-AA opponents. For sports other than football and basketball there are no scheduling requirements. There are not attendance requirements for football, or arena game requirements for basketball. There are maximum financial aid awards for each sport that a Div. II school must not exceed.

Division II teams usually feature a number of local or in-state student-athletes. Many Division II student-athletes pay for school through a combination of scholarship money, grants, student loans and employment earnings. Division II athletics programs are financed in the institution's budget like other academic departments on campus. Traditional rivalries with regional institutions dominate schedules of many Division II athletics programs (NCAA, 2004b, p.5)

Division III - Division III institutions have to sponsor at least five sports for men and five for women, with two team sports for each gender, and each playing season represented by each gender. There are minimum contest and

participant minimums for each sport. Division III athletics features student-athletes who receive no financial aid related to their athletic ability and athletic departments are staffed and funded like any other department in the university. Division III athletics departments place special importance on the impact of athletics on the participants rather than on the spectators. The student-athlete's experience is of paramount concern. Division III athletics encourages participation by maximizing the number and variety of athletics opportunities available to students, placing primary emphasis on regional in-season and conference competition (NCAA, 2004c, p.5).

Reclassification process - Reclassification is the process by which an institution of higher education makes a “formal request to the National Collegiate Athletic Association for a change in division membership” (Schwarz, 1998, p.3). Four year institutions are classified into 3 different levels: Division III, II, and I. Division I is further divided into sub-levels (I-AAA, I-AA, I-A). If a school would like to reclassify to Division I, the following process would occur (example is given from the Division II level):

Schools have what the NCAA calls an “exploratory year”, in which there are no major changes and the university is still able to compete at the Division II level. During the exploratory year, an institution must submit a strategic plan that addresses numerous Division I operating principles. The institution would then enter its first transition year, and at that time the institution must comply with all minimum Division I contest and participation requirements, though it will not be required to play a full Division I schedule. Also during the first year, key administrators (chief executive officers, directors

of athletics, faculty athletics representatives, senior women administrators and compliance coordinators) must attend the NCAA Convention and orientation meeting. The institution would be ineligible for post-season playoffs for a four-year period. During the second year, the school must be in full compliance with all Division I legislation and membership requirements. Teams will be on a full Division I schedule but still remain ineligible to compete for a championship. The third and fourth transition years, the institution must complete an NCAA certification evaluation visit and self study process evaluation. The school would still be ineligible for a Division I championship. Finally, in five years later, the school would be considered a full-fledged Division I member.

**Active Member** - An active member is a four-year college or university or a two-year upper-level collegiate institution accredited by the appropriate regional accrediting agency and duly elected to active membership under the provisions of the Association bylaws. Active members have the right to compete in NCAA championships, to vote on legislation and other issues before the Association, and to enjoy other privileges of membership designated in the constitution and bylaws of the Association (NCAA Online, 2005a).

**Provisional Member** - A provisional member is a four-year college or university or a two-year upper-level collegiate institution accredited by the appropriate regional accrediting agency and that has applied for active membership in the Association. Provisional membership is a prerequisite for active membership in the Association. The institution shall be elected to provisional membership under the bylaws of the Association.

Provisional members shall receive all publications and mailings received by active

members in addition to other privileges designated in the constitution and bylaws of the Association. Provisional membership is limited to a three-year period (NCAA On-line, 2005a).

### The Structure of the NCAA

Intercollegiate athletic programs have always operated within the framework of a sponsoring university; however the early stages of intercollegiate athletic competition did not function with the formal structure that is currently in place. Formality of intercollegiate athletics came as higher education officials noticed the ability to gain additional revenues from this uncontrolled source, specifically college football (Gerdy, 2002; Sage, 1990). As the popularity of football grew in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, administrators began to understand the potential for college sports to generate revenue and publicity. Administrators felt that if they could address the problems that initially plagued college athletics, then great benefits could be possible.

Athletic contests, which were once controlled, for the most part by the student body, came under the direction of college administrators. Questions concerning cheating, the high rate of injuries, and the eligibility of athletes forced college administrators to become active managers for college athletics. In 1905, to standardize rules and address these concerns, the national organization called the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States (IAAUS) was formed (Eitzen & Sage, 2003; NCAA On-line, 1999).

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the organizational structure continued to become more formalized. As national championship contests were formed in addition to football, in sports such as track and field, basketball, and baseball in the 1930's and 1940's, the

winner take all mentality began to take shape. As a result of placing great importance on winning, illegal activities also flourished (Chu, Segrave, & Becker, 1985). To combat the problems, the NCAA hired its first full time director, Walter Byers in 1951. A year later a national headquarters was established in Kansas City, Missouri.

In 1973, at the NCAA's first special convention, the Special Committee on Reorganization, presented a proposal for restructuring the NCAA that included dividing member institutions into Division I, II and III. The main purpose of dividing institutions was based on competition; with the most competitive schools participating at the Division I level. However, this structure only lasted 5 years, as schools at the Division I level needed to separate for a second time to accommodate different competitive levels within Division I (NCAA online, 2005b).

In 1978, Division I members voted to create subdivisions I-A, I-AA in football and subdivision I-AAA for schools that competed in Division I but did not have scholarship football programs. The structure that was voted on 1978 remains the organizational structure that exists today (NCAA online, 2005b).

The last major structure change to the NCAA was the acceptance and continued growth of women's athletics in 1980. With the passage of Title IX in 1972 and the addition of women's championships to the NCAA in 1981 and 1982, women were at the forefront of two decades of change (Hawes, 1999). Title IX continues to provide opportunities for females in intercollegiate athletics as women's sports continue to grow.

### *Membership*

During the 2004-05 academic year there were 1,028 active member schools that self-determine in which of the three divisions they will be classified. Each institution must annually meet membership criteria for that division. The active member institutions and voting conferences are the ultimate voice in all Association decisions. However, the balance of votes is favored toward Division I members. The NCAA executive committee, which is a 19 member governing body, allows 72% (13 representatives) of the seats to be filled by Division I institutions (NCAA online, 2005). Therefore, one can assume that most of the decisions made by the executive committee will be designed to favor Division I athletics (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2004d).

Of the 1,028 active members, 326 are classified as Division I, 281 members are Division II, and the remaining 421 schools are in Division III. Since 2001-02, Division I has added 5 new members, Division II has added 21 new members, and Division III added 25 new members. The increase across the board suggests many trends: (a) schools continue to reclassify from National Association for Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), junior college status, or no athletic membership to NCAA Division III; (b) schools at Division III or lower are continuing the transition to Division II; (c) some schools who reclassify to Division II are schools that are not satisfied, and thus, continue the move to Division I.

### *The Growth of Intercollegiate Athletics*

The steady rise in intercollegiate athletics' popularity has forced universities to consider investing more in their athletic programs in order to achieve a higher level of

success. However, a major investment in college athletic programs is not a new phenomenon, rather it is one that is entrenched in the deep seeded traditions and beliefs that have helped shape today's version of intercollegiate athletics (Gerdy, 1997; 2002).

Over the first half of the century, college athletics' status grew at a steady pace as fans, alumni, and the local community began to associate themselves with college teams. The biggest jump in popularity and revenue began with the advent of televised college sporting contests, which helped build fan bases. In the early 1950's, television stations started showing a small number of powerhouse universities to a national audience. This was the creation of "big time" athletic programs, as schools started seeing tremendous profits from televising their athletic contests, particularly football. The notoriety gained from television continues to be essential in the shaping of Division I athletics (Chu, et al, 1985).

Perhaps the two most significant events leading to the rapid growth of Division I athletics are the formation of ESPN (the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network) and the expansion of the NCAA men's basketball tournament in 1985 to 64 teams. The context of college athletics would be changed evermore in order to accommodate the drama of sports captured on television. In the late 1980's and early 1990's, extensive media coverage of intercollegiate athletics, particularly men's basketball, allowed ESPN to flourish economically (Freeman, 2000). ESPN had also benefited from the 1984 Supreme Court ruling in the case of NCAA v. the University of Oklahoma, which stated that the NCAA's exclusive rights to television contracts violated federal antitrust laws (Worsnop, 1994). This victory for the University of Oklahoma, and

other intercollegiate athletic programs essential meant that schools could negotiate their own television contracts, rather than be controlled by the NCAA. ESPN, in addition to the major networks' coverage (CBS, NBC, and ABC) of college sports, allowed the major Division I schools to benefit financially.

In 1985, ESPN began broadcasting the early rounds of the NCAA men's basketball tournament and introduced the idea of the "Cinderella" team. Ratings for the tournament reached an all time high and established what the American public has called "March Madness". This sport phenomenon that has grossed millions of dollars for the NCAA, has also created more attention than any other intercollegiate sporting event for many reasons. One such reason suggested by Price (1991) is that the tournament style format provides fans with everything truly wanted in a sporting event:

The format of the Final Four reveals our delight in a capitalistic sort of competition. It assumes and plays out the myth of the survival of the fittest. We also are fascinated by the democratic model of establishing initial equity, and the belief that the oppressed or neglected team might finally make it all the way to the top. (Price, 1991, p.54)

This exposure led CBS Television in 1991 to sign a contract with the NCAA to broadcast all rounds of the men's basketball tournament until 1997 for \$142 million annually (Parks & Quarterman, 2002). In 1999, CBS signed an eleven year, \$6 billion deal to continue coverage of the NCAA men's basketball tournament, along with other NCAA championships. In addition, NCAA also offers CBS rights to games' content on the internet, and merchandising rights for tournament-related products (Suggs, 1999). Schools that did not have the opportunity to become the "Cinderella" school in the men's

basketball tournament and gain a portion of the large television market began to reorganize their athletic programs to move to Division I.

*Intercollegiate athletics and higher education*

Research (Eitzen & Sage, 2003; Gerdy, 1997, 2002; Lord, 1999; Solow, 1994; Sperber, 1990; 2000; Suggs, 2001; Toma & Cross, 1996; Tucker & Amato, 1993; Zimbalist, 1999) has focused on intercollegiate athletics, specifically established Division I-A programs. Identifying schools as “big-time” athletic programs and examining their role in higher education, as well as debating their benefit to higher education have been at the forefront.

Publicity and notoriety gained from increased media coverage can be a double-edge sword, highlighting big wins but also covering the corruption and scandal that occur frequently at the Division I programs. Some administrators believe that Division I athletic success will lead to increased enrollment, better quality students (Tucker & Amato, 1993), an increase in philanthropic giving (Solow, 1994), and a brand identity as a winner. While other administrators believe that athletic success is given far too much credit for its role in enhancing other university endeavors, and in fact, can become detrimental to organizational goals (Baxter, Margavio, & Lambert, 1996; Chu, 1989; Coakley, 2001;.Davies, 1994; Eitzen, & Sage, 2003; Gerdy, 1997; Sage, 1990; Sperber, 1990; 2000).

Joe B. Wyatt, former chancellor of Vanderbilt University, best sums up the dilemma that is often associated with intercollegiate athletics. “College athletics programs provide opportunities for growth and development, fuel school spirit and

community involvement, and open doors for students who otherwise would not have had a chance to attend college – benefits that we, of course, proudly trumpet” (Wyatt, 1999, p. A56). This success, however, does not come to all of those that participate, and at times, athletics can bring problems to the university. Chancellor Wyatt is quick to point out that, “far too often, and with increasing frequency, college athletics has been a source of embarrassment” (Wyatt, 1999, p. A56).

Although research about established Division I-A programs is extensive, the literature to clarify the willingness of higher education administrators to increase institutional support to their athletic programs has been limited. To understand and define intercollegiate athletics, researchers have framed studies across many disciplines, such as higher education, business, sociology, philosophy, and history. However, a clear understanding as to why schools continue to emphasize athletics within the context of the institutional mission is narrow. In addition, research on the impact of such a serious commitment on stakeholders is negligible. Reclassification of an athletic department is an obvious organizational change that stresses the increased commitment from the institution to their athletic programs. Therefore, a closer look at schools that are moving to the Division I-AAA, I-AA and I-A level is required. In particular, it was necessary to study the impact of the organizational change and the overall strategy of reclassification on an institution.

### Conceptual Framework

The reclassification process creates a great deal of organizational change; change to the athletic department, the institution, and the external constituency. In order to best

answer the central research question of how the reclassification process to Division I athletics impacts an institution and its stakeholders, it was important to first identify a theoretical framework, develop a conceptual model, and to analyze the transition by way of this model.

Developing a conceptual framework required review of numerous theories used to study intercollegiate athletics. In shaping this framework it was important first to understand two important viewpoints regarding college athletics.

1. Sport, in particular intercollegiate athletics, is an institution that must be critically analyzed as a part of the social, economic, political, and cultural context in which it operates (Sage, 1990).

2. The reclassification of an intercollegiate athletics department is a unique process within the social institution of higher education. The strategic transition to Division I impacts many constituents of a university, and could transform the organizational mission of the athletic department and the institution.

The potential impact not only to the athletic department, but to the entire institution, was described in a report completed by the consulting firm Carr Associates for South Dakota State University (SDSU), which began the reclassification process in 2004. In response to a question about why a move to Division I was important to the entire campus, the report stated,

Healthy universities are living organizations that, if they are student focused and forward looking, grow and change over time. SDSU believes that wise universities continue to reaffirm their values, but also reach out to new opportunities (moving to Division I) that present themselves. (South Dakota State University, 2002)

The report also touches on the university context in which intercollegiate athletics operates. South Dakota State University, similar to other universities that emphasize Division I athletics, states that this opportunity is not just an athletic opportunity, but rather, a campus-wide decision, reinforcing the belief that the reclassification is a university change. “The divisional status of South Dakota State may have far reaching effects on every aspect of their campus. Enrollment management, grant receipts, collaborative research, etc. may all be affected by a potential move” (South Dakota State University, 2002).

Based on these two essential viewpoints and findings from a pilot study, the following study of reclassification was inherently a critical analysis not only of the athletic programs, but also the institution’s strategic change process. This study utilized organizational theory (OT), more specifically Pettigrew’s (1985a) contextualist approach. Organizational theory is effective in studying higher education because OT draws strongly from the sociological discipline. This allowed the framework, and thus the study, to be shaped first, by examining the university as a social institution and second, by how the organizational change of transitioning to Division I impacts the higher education community (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

### Organizational Theory

Organizational theory (OT), takes on a macro perspective, and “looks not only at the organization’s characteristics, but also at the characteristics of the environment, and the department and groups that make up the organization” (Daft, 1989, p. 25).

Organizational theorists are concerned with the total organization’s ability to achieve its

goals effectively; thus they must not only consider how it is structured but also how it is situated in a broader sociopolitical and economic context. Research shaped by organizational theory analyzes themes related to the design or re-design of an organization, addressing topics such as the role of power, managing change, and the process of decision making; while understanding the impact of contextual factors such as strategy, size, location, and technology (Slack, 1997).

One area which organizational theorists have spent a great deal of time investigating is the strategic change process within an organization. As intercollegiate athletics has grown into a multi-billion dollar business, all while operating under the structure of higher education, noticeable and frequent change has occurred. Perhaps what has been lost in the transformation of college sports is the impact that changes, such as reclassification, have on other areas of the institution outside the athletic department.

Due to the comprehensive and investigative nature of this study, George and Jones' (1995) generic definition of organizational change as the movement away from one state toward another state, is employed as a guiding definition. The *strategic change process* evaluated within this study begins in the initial state, which is the state of the university prior to reclassification (Division III or Division II) through the institutions' current state of Division I. This broad definition allows the greatest scope for recognizing change within an organizational setting, and therefore is ideal for the conceptual model chosen and the purpose of this paper.

Change can occur within a sport organization or within the sport industry through many different ways: personnel, organizational or association structure, facilities, new

athletic programs, product development, regulatory change, and technology enhancement (McCann, 1991). Due to the enormous pressure to succeed and to keep a competitive advantage, intercollegiate athletic departments are constantly in the process of change. Furthermore, pressure from both the internal and external communities have raised the importance on the success of organizational changes.

Similar to other business enterprises, change can be small (change of employees, such as an assistant coach) or large (change in authority structure, control systems), but a change in one area will normally require an adjustment in other areas. Thus, the modification from a non-scholarship Division III program to that of a full scholarship Division I program certainly creates a ripple of changes across campus (Cross, 1999). Based on this organizational change theory, the following central question is posed.

#### Central Question

How does the reclassification process to Division I athletics impact the organizational dynamics of an institution and its stakeholders?

#### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research is to describe the process of reclassifying an athletic department to Division I and its impact on the institution and stakeholders.

#### Research Questions

The following primary research questions were addressed in order to achieve the purpose of this study:

Research Question 1: Why did the reclassification of the athletic program to Division I status occur?

- a. What or who was the motivation for change?

Research Question 2: How have the anticipated effects from establishing a NCAA Division I athletic program been realized?

- a. How did the reclassification of intercollegiate athletics impact the overall mission of the institution?
- b. How did the reclassification of intercollegiate athletics change the university constituency (administration, faculty, staff, students, alumni)?
- c. How did the reclassification of intercollegiate athletics result in a change in university resources (i.e., personnel, enrollment, and facilities)?

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Between 1985-2005, 55 schools have transitioned from Division III or II to Division I (see Appendix A). In order to gain an understanding for the motivation and the impact of the move to Division I, it was important to review literature about schools that have reclassified. In addition, analyzing literature that describes the current state of Division I programs was essential for understanding the environment in which the organizational change took place. Therefore, several issues were addressed in this literature review, including:

1. Analyzing research and identifying factors provided by constituents from schools that have recently reclassified their athletic programs from Division III or II to Division I.
2. Analyzing research and factors conducted on schools that are currently in the process of the transition from Division III or II to Division I.
3. Identifying research that provides a current landscape of Division I athletics.
4. Identify a conceptual framework for the study of reclassification to Division I.

Research has shown that the relationship between intercollegiate athletics and higher education has not always been agreeable. The success of this volatile relationship hinges on several unpredictable issues such as, financial support, academic priority versus athletic success, commercialization of student athletes, athlete behavior on and off the field, and alumni and fan support. Basing this important association on such

unpredictability often begs the question, why do administrators place such high emphasis on building a bigger and better athletic department? In addition, what, if any, impact does the increased commitment to athletics have on the institution's constituency? This review aims to identify research that attempted to answer these questions by first, identifying factors given by administrators who reclassified their athletic department to the most competitive level, Division I, and second, identifying the personal and professional impact the reclassification had on the stakeholders.

Reclassification to Division I requires a major commitment from the stakeholders of the institution. Research provides numerous reasons why higher education administrators continue to emphasize athletics. Many of these same reasons may be related to the justification of the organizational change associated with the reclassification to Division I. Factors given by administrators were broken down into three categories: (a) historical factors, (b) financial factors, and (c) philosophical factors. Within each category are factors given by universities for upgrading their athletic department from a lower level Division to Division I.

One could argue that some examples fall into more than one category. For instance, increased athletic notoriety could be both a financial and philosophical factor; however the majority of the research suggests that administrators understand that the institution would have to reach a very high level of notoriety to lead to increased fan support, which could then be converted into a financial benefit. Initially, increased notoriety would mean a change in intuitional philosophy by committing to sport as an entertainment vehicle, as seen at the Division I level.

### Historical Factors

The dilemma of supporting athletics has grown to a level never seen before in American society. Sociologist Jay Coakley (2001) suggests that intercollegiate athletics has developed into an overemphasis on the “sports development model” promoting only the bigger and better programs, which may explain a strategic move to Division I. Gerdy (2002) believes this phenomenon of the “lure of the big-time,” with its big money and high visibility, can be overpowering; often causing even the most-experienced leaders to lose perspective (p. 34).

Coakley (2001) proposes that to understand sports in today’s “sport’s development model,” we should have a sense of what physical games, contests, and sport activities were like in the past. More specifically, Coakley adds, that we need to look at history as a way to, “focus primarily on what sport activities tell us about relationships between various groups of people at particular times and places” (p. 56). The literature on intercollegiate athletics suggests that administrators have used the past to make decisions about the strategy of their own athletic department.

History has always played a major role in the shaping of college athletics. Intercollegiate athletic competition between colleges and universities first occurred over 150 years ago and current understanding of the athletic landscape is informed by its earliest developments (Mechikoff, 2000). Research addressing the formation and early stages of intercollegiate athletics indicates that university administrators viewed athletics as a means to generate publicity and increase enrollment (Brooks & Althouse, 1993, Chu, Segrave, & Becker, 1985, Hart-Nibbrig & Cottingham, 1986). Administrators, if not

already aware of sports' popularity, became very familiar with the power of intercollegiate athletics with the advent of television in the 1950s (Hart-Nibbrig & Cottingham, 1986). As television coverage grew to enormous heights in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, higher education officials not only took notice of their own school's place in intercollegiate athletics history, but also the history of their competitors.

Historical research on intercollegiate athletics and the impact on reclassification tend to be divided into three sub-categories: (a) single athletic event (b) rivalries and athletic traditions and (c) changing the institution's profile.

Historical factors that may impact a decision to reclassify can come in the form of a single athletic event that has gained tremendous recognition for the institution, (Toma & Cross, 1998), a set of repetitive events that help build athletic traditions or college rivalries (Mechikoff, 2000), or the institution's history outside of intercollegiate athletics, which helped shape the current profile. Chu (1989) suggests that it is not uncommon for higher education administrators to analyze the athletic history of competing institutions with a similar profile in order to determine a strategic course of action. For example, historical events (big wins, athletic pageantry, championship seasons, and star athlete receiving national recognition) that have improved another school's image are often cited as reasons for becoming a "big-time" athletic department (Chu, 1989, Davies, 1994, Merchikoff, 2000). The same reasons are given in a reclassification study by Cross (1999) as factors for reclassification to Division I. Administrators measured the perceived impact of intercollegiate athletic events and traditions by analyzing the

enhanced notoriety, increases in donations, and an improved undergraduate admissions pool at institutions that operated at Division I.

*Single event*

The college or university that was once nameless has been placed on the national stage, in front of millions of people, and now is perceived to be a winner, both athletically and academically. A primary example of this is the College of Charleston (C of C). As the College of Charleston's former president, Alex Sanders stated, "We're 227 years old and until we had a team in the Top 25, nobody had heard of us" (Dodd, 1997, p. A1). The College of Charleston, the 13<sup>th</sup> oldest university in the nation, consistently receives press that acknowledges its academic standards and proud traditions, but it had never received the attention that came after their men's basketball team won games in the NCAA Men's Basketball Championship Tournament. An indication of the rise in interest was evidenced in the admissions office. During the team's tournament run (approximately 2 weeks), internet inquiries to the admissions office were up from an average of 80 per week to 380 per day (Dodd, 1997). Since the College of Charleston's successful play in men's basketball, many other universities with a similar profile have cited C of C as a model example of what could happen after reclassification.

In the 1990's, Gonzaga University, a small private liberal arts school, received tremendous national recognition with three consecutive trips to the Men's Basketball NCAA Round of 16, including a 1999 appearance in the West Regional championship game. Many small liberal arts schools try to mimic the success of Gonzaga's basketball program in hopes of gaining similar recognition (Moran, 2003). Success, as described by

administrators at Gonzaga, includes basketball achievements such as continued winning, regular television appearances, a new basketball facility, and nationwide notoriety (LeFebvre, 2005). In addition, the University has experienced an increase in students and a capital campaign built on the recent accomplishments of athletics (Moran, 2005; Spitzer, 2002). As one Gonzaga University board member stated, "All over the place now, you see people wearing Gonzaga hats and Gonzaga T-shirts whether you're in Calgary or Florida" (LeFebvre, 2005, p. C1). During the 2004-05 season, Gonzaga, which did not host a nationally televised game until 2002, completed 10 national TV appearances, two of which occurred at their brand new on-campus facility (Moran, 2005).

In the early 1980's, a substantial increase in applications occurred at Boston College, when the Eagles' football team was having success. The surge in interest appeared so clearly attributable to the team's success that it became known in admissions circles as the "Flutie factor," after Doug Flutie, the team's captivating quarterback and 1984 Heisman Trophy winner (Selingo, 1997). Northwestern University also experienced an increase in applications after its football team went to the Rose Bowl in 1996, for the first time in 47 years (Dodd, 1997).

#### *Rivalries and athletic traditions*

In addition to one-time events, research proposes that the traditions associated with athletics or the repetition of big-time athletic events is just as appealing to college administrators (Coakley, 2001). The regular, yearly renewal of athletic competition provides ritualistic events at the most prestigious institutions across the country. In an academic culture that normally did not promote collaboration between institutions or

conversation amongst alumni, athletics became the means to open conversation and competition (Rudolph, 1990).

Football rivals at Division I institutions that draw large crowds and receive tremendous publicity is one historical factor that has been “acknowledged as one of college sport’s major justifications” (Chu, 1989, p. 385). However, rivalries do not just happen; but are events created over time that become larger than “just another game” (Worsnop, 1994, p.15). Although rivalries exist at many levels of athletic competition, nothing compares to “big-time” Division I rivalries because, to all of the stakeholders, much is at stake. As Looney (1999) writes “a game addresses us superficially, while a rivalry addresses us at the core. The essence of sport is caring about the outcome...In a rivalry, millions really care” (p. 12). Although most schools realize that it would take years to generate the passion of the Yale versus Harvard football game, (which is over 125 years old), many administrators believe that rivalries and publicity will eventually be created.

Most recently, institutions are reclassifying to Division I because their biggest rival has already transitioned. Due to many athletic traditions and fierce rivalries that would be missed, the University of North Dakota (UND) is analyzing a transition to Division I. Their institutional change comes only a year after North Dakota State University (NDSU) made the transition. North Dakota State’s athletic teams successfully competed in Division II, but as of 2004 are competing in Division I. Traditionally; there had been a strong rivalry between NDSU and UND. However, UND did not made an immediate switch to Division I like NDSU. UND has expressed some interest in a

possible move to Division I, but the university is currently studying the financial needs such a move would require. At this point in time, “the athletic rivalry between the two campuses is at a standstill”(Hotlzer & Kolpack, 2004).

South Dakota State University (SDSU), which also recently moved from Division II to I has become NDSU's new rival (Suggs, 2002). The talk of transition also impacted the University of South Dakota, which has decided not to pursue Division I but rather will emphasize building a stronger academic program. Donald Dahlin, South Dakota's acting president, stated the university "places its emphasis and its resources on the 'student' part of the 'student athlete'" (Suggs, p. A41).

In addition to rivalries, other traditions associated with intercollegiate athletics have become a major reason why athletics is a fixture on college campuses. Students, alumni, and fans have become accustomed to tailgating, fight songs, and halftime bands at many athletic contests. At many universities, high-profile spectator sports embody the popular customs, rituals and traditions associated with the collegiate life (Toma & Cross, 1998). These games and the pageantry surrounding the athletic contest also play a part in the recruitment of students and the cultivation of alumni to be a part of the athletic program (Smith, 1990).

Perhaps the most prominent example of athletic traditions impacting an institution occurs at the University of Notre Dame, which has fed off its long tradition of football victories to showcase the academic programs (Molloy, 1987; Sperber, 1993). Athletic traditions, such as The Ohio State University marching band, the Army-Navy corps march, and the Texas A&M 12<sup>th</sup> man, “not only give continuity to the sport but to an

entire school” (Lindsay, 2005, p.1), impacting student enrollment, alumni involvement and fund raising.

Research has also been done to show that prominent athletic traditions can have a negative influence on student recruitment. Khayat (1998) discusses many of the traditions at the University of Mississippi and suggests many of them actually hurt student admissions, diversity, and recruitment of faculty. The article cites, “the nickname (Rebels), the school's mascot (Colonel Reb, who resembles the stereotypical portrayal of a nineteenth-century plantation owner), and the Confederate flag which is prominent displayed at football games, are signs of a world that most find offensive” (p.62).

Another culturally insensitive tradition long associated with college sports has been the misuse of Native American images. This tradition, long ignored by the NCAA and its member institutions has come under scrutiny over the exploitation of the Native American heritage. Specific athletic traditions include Florida State University football games often start with a flaming spear being thrown into the turf by a non-Indigenous man on a horse, dressed up as Chief Osceola. Similar imagery is also shown at the University of Illinois at Urbana. The nickname “Fighting Illini”, and their mascot Chief Illiniwek is a proud symbol of the flagship university within the State of Illinois system. However, the University fails to address the racial stereotypes associated with the dances, costumes, and other athletic related rituals (King & Springwood, 2001).

#### *Emulating another institution*

Many institutions have considered reclassification based on the history of another school, in hopes of imitating their athletic success. Administrators, such as President

Greiner at the University of Buffalo, one of the 55 schools to transition from a lower division to Division I, noticed the proud athletic tradition at other state universities. He states that Buffalo “ought to be mentioned in the same breath as the Universities of Michigan and Virginia, institutions known for strong academic programs and for nationally recognized athletic teams” (Lords, 1999, p.A5). In a case study by Cross (1999), one institution, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), was significantly impacted by the University of North Carolina at Charlotte’s (UNCC) success in the 1970’s. UNCC made a successful run to the “Final Four” in the NCAA Men’s Basketball Tournament in 1976. An administrator and board member noticed the impact this had on the city and the university, as well as the high level of publicity it received as a result of its athletic success. Subsequently, they considered the possibility that UNCG “could experience similar levels in its athletic program and reap the associated benefits” (p.90). This particular case study indicates how historical examples of institution can begin the organizational change of reclassifying at another.

#### *Changing the institutional profile*

For some institutions, an emphasis on athletics was in response to the institutional profile. When examining their school’s profile, many administrators discovered areas that limited the institution from attracting a bigger and better student population. In response, many past institutions have used athletics to change the perception of the university.

Examples of a change to the institution's history occurred at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Florida State University, and James Madison University, all of which were single-sex, state-supported institutions (Cross, 1999).

At each of these universities, the decisions to establish an NCAA Division I athletic program was made simultaneously with other broader institutional changes. Division I athletics was to serve as a means to attract men and to make the campus appear more comprehensive in scope. (p.87)

Other schools have cited that the history and current institutional profile was not very different from their competitors, with the exception of the athletic departments. In an attempt to be more noticeable, schools wanted to brand itself bigger and better than its competitors by ascending to Division I. Administrators at many institutions thought that an organizational change emphasizing intercollegiate athletics would be a great opportunity to present their campus to a new, perhaps better student population. The greatest examples are seen at state universities that wish to detach from the perception that they are similar to other schools in the state system. In addition to UNCG, California state schools such as Sacramento State University (Cross, 1999), and University of California Davis stated this as a main factor for reclassifying to Division I.

This was also the case for other SUNY schools that transitioned to Division I, in hopes of gaining more of a presence within the state of New York (Lords 1999; Wong, 2002). John H. Marburger III, the president of Stony Brook, said of the early attitude within SUNY:

I think it was kind of a particularly Eastern notion about athletics, a reflection of the Ivy League approach. You must remember, New York had no tradition of

big, comprehensive public universities before the Rockefeller era. It didn't seem fitting for us to go the route of Illinois or Ohio or Michigan, which attracts many in-state students. (p. D1)

The State University of New York at Buffalo also felt the pressure of being a flagship public institution. National recognition was another primary factor identified by the University of Buffalo administration. The then president, Mr. Steven Sample says that when he arrived to the University of Buffalo, the school was nearly unknown outside New York because it lacked a big-time athletics program. In an article written by Lords (1999), Mr. Sample stated:

We looked around and saw that there was not a flagship public institution anywhere in the United States that wasn't playing on the Division I level. To me it was obvious that it was something we needed, and I think it was absolutely the right thing to do. (p.A5)

Similar to the examples given above, once an historical assessment is made, and prestige, tradition, and rivalries are discussed, institutions may also look at other factors, such as financial and social factors to determine a strategy.

#### Philosophical Factors

When divisional ascension occurs, an athletic program commits to moving from a lower to an upper division. Divisional philosophies focus mainly on the role of the student-athlete and the purpose of intercollegiate athletics. However, each division operates under very different philosophical principles. Therefore a reclassification of athletics will cause an institutional change in philosophy regarding intercollegiate programs. Provided in this section is a summary of the literature associated with the

philosophy of intercollegiate athletics, as well as an examination of the philosophical statements of Division III, II, and I.

### *Division III*

The Division III philosophy statement places a strong emphasis on meeting the needs of the internal constituents. Focus is clearly placed on the participants, not the fans. It emphasizes the development of sportsmanship, academics, and treating the student-athlete no different than any other student (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2004c).

From this philosophical standpoint, Division III members have agreed to provide no athletic aid to student-athletes, disallow the practice of red-shirting, and create a competitive, yet limited, schedule designed with local and regional boundaries. In addition, Division III members stress the importance of having many sport teams in order to accommodate as many students as fiscally possible. Overall, the philosophy is about participation and competition. Success should not be defined by winning national championships.

### *Division II*

The Division II philosophy statement stresses balance between student and athlete, as well as participant and spectator. The philosophy is broad, with few defining characteristics, raising the question of whether Division II truly operates under *any* philosophy. Division II members have recently struggled with an identity crisis, due to the fact that they do not subscribe to either the beliefs of Division III or Division I (Johnson, 2005). Division II operates with limited athletic aid, less requirements for a

number of sports, and no minimum spectator attendance requirements. Division II members however, place an emphasis on defining a national champion in each sport. Academics are important but are “measured in part by an institution's student-athletes graduating at least at the same rate as the institution's student body”; thus indicating a split between the general student body and the student-athlete has begun (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2004b, p.4). Overall, the notion of balance has created confusion due to the effort of trying to decide between the numerous dichotomies.

### *Division I*

This is the highest level of athletic competition in the NCAA, and it is promoted as such. Student-athletes are provided athletic grant in aid to compete in a sport that is viewed as entertainment. Division I has strict participation, scheduling, and spectator attendance guidelines. The philosophy statement is built around striving for regional and national athletic excellence. Thus, recruitment of the best student athletes and financing the intercollegiate programs is done at the highest levels. Finally, membership completely understands and accepts its “dual objective” in athletics of “serving both the university or college community (participants, student body, faculty-staff, alumni) and the general public (community, area, state, nation) (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2004a, p. 351). Because of the emphasis on revenue generation and entertainment, Division I is vastly different from Division II or III. The university commitment to competing and winning at the Division I level is substantial, and as a result has received the most attention in the literature.

*Division I: reality versus philosophy.*

Theoretically, philosophical statements should serve as a guide for planning and implementing an athletic department within each division. The statements assist in defining the nature and purpose of each division. However, literature associated with the Division I philosophy addresses many of the myths and rhetoric throughout college athletics.

Publications (Gerdy, 1997, Rose, 1985, Schwarz, 1998; Sperber, 1990,) regarding the Division I philosophy has raised three foremost concerns: the status of amateurism, college athletics as entertainment, and a win at all cost mentality. The myth of amateurism (Eitzen, 1989; Rose, 1985; Sack, 2003) has always come under attack, as the NCAA promotes this philosophy while student-athletes make millions of dollars for the Association. In addressing the role of amateur student-athletes, Rose (1985) proposes that all parts of a program should reflect the philosophy of the institution, rather than only the beliefs of those who participate and manage the program.

However, managing an institution based on one philosophy requires incredible leadership from the top down, including the board of trustees and presidents. Research has been dedicated to the role higher education administrators must play in establishing and controlling a philosophy that meets the overall mission of the institution, rather than just college athletics (Frey 1994; Knight Foundation, 2001; Smith 2003). Some authors believe this may be the best way to control college athletics. Much of the findings have called for presidents to play a more active role in stressing the philosophy of the institution over the emphasis of winning (Smith, 2003).

Another philosophy that university leaders promote within college athletics is the philosophy of sport as a means to build great character. In describing this philosophy, Owens (1985) wrote that “athletics prepared students for participation in the larger republic beyond the campus by fostering courage, perseverance, and resoluteness” (p.182). However, authors cite numerous examples when intercollegiate athletics has bypassed an opportunity to build character, choosing to stress other aspects of sport. The most frequent examples are the recruitment of talented high school athletes with an atrocious academic record and a criminal past (Golenbock, 1989), the rewarding of violence and cheating to win, championships, and self-display (Coakley, 2001).

Another philosophy given much attention is the “win at all cost” mentality in college athletics particularly associated with Division I athletics. This contradicts the myth that athletics is about participation and learning. Much of research devoted to the “win at all cost” mentality addresses cheating in intercollegiate athletics. Eitzen and Sage (2003) remind us that sport has become a winner-take-all mentality, similar to many other institutions in American society. As in other areas of society, when you place people under pressure to succeed, “the zeal to win will cause people to cheat.”(p. 46). Eitzen (1986) also suggests that the big business of winning runs counter to the principles of higher education, intercollegiate athletics, and amateurism. He suggests that it is impossible to commit to such different philosophies. Winning has led many schools to recruit student athletes that are not academically qualified and has lead to academic cheating (Golenbock, 1995; Thelin & Wiseman, 1989).

### *Committing to Division I.*

To combat hasty decisions from non-Division I schools who wish to reclassify to Division I, provisions have been established to educate institutions with the divisional philosophy. Schools interested in becoming a Division I institution have to participate in a Division I Provisional Membership Process and Education Program. The program allows schools to compete for one year as an exploratory member. During this time the institution should fully evaluate its desire to work within the Division I philosophy (NCAA, 2004a). Practically speaking, it also allows institutions a method for complying with the Division I legislative and financial requirements. Ultimately, it should prevent unqualified universities from making a grave mistake in reclassifying to Division I.

The Division I level does not meet every institution's mission; however, the attraction of "big-time" athletics has drawn many schools to the highest level. Essentially, a change in philosophy to Division I means an organizational change to produce athletic entertainment, and provide increased financial support to recruit scholarship athletes and well paid coaches and administrators. As Baxter, Margavio and Lambert (1996) suggest, the financial structure creates two different types of philosophical goals in Division I, one that is for winning and profit and the other that tries to satisfy the educational mission of the university. Once a philosophical commitment is made to reclassify, administrators must consider the subsequent financial factors.

### Financial Factors

The transformation of college athletics over the past 30 years into a multi-billion dollar, internationally recognized business has changed the strategy of intercollegiate

athletic departments. Budget minded administrators have realized that a winning team can provide an effective means of publicity to their institutions while securing much needed additional funding. Research on the direct financial factors clearly show that the bigger Division I-A institutions have developed new revenue streams, particularly in football (Howard & Compton, 2004). This potential revenue stream is a major reason higher education administrators are so quick to try to become bigger and better (Cross, 1999, Schwarz, 1998; Tomasini, 2003). As institutions begin thinking about transitioning to Division I the potential for increased revenues certainly becomes a factor (Davies, 1994).

Financial factors, for the purpose of this literature review, include both athletic department and institutional revenue streams. Financial factors which are directly associated with the athletic participation may include NCAA Division I membership payouts, such as increased television revenue shares (Lederman, 1990a; Marchiony 1999), as well as conference (Suggs, 2003) and association revenues (Fatsis, 2004). Direct financial profits may also include ticket, merchandise and promotional profits, sponsorships (Dodds, 1997; Lord, 1999) and additional revenues from local and regional television coverage (Davies, 1994; Fulks, 2000). Institutional financial factors include areas outside of the athletic department that may see an increase in revenues due to athletic notoriety, such as increased enrollment (Toma & Cross, 1998), economic impact on the community (Semoon & Canode, 2002), and increased philanthropic giving (Blum 1994a; Grimes & Chressanthis, 1994; Solow, 1994; Stinson & Howard, 2004; Tucker, 2004). A major dilemma with examining indirect results of athletic success is

determining the accurate amount of credit that should be given to athletic teams when enrollment and donations increase or the economic status of the community improves.

This section is broken down into three parts: the first is an examination of Division I athletic revenue sources that have received a majority of the attention: Division I membership payouts and conference affiliation, the Bowl Championship Series, and sponsorships. As discussed in Chapter 1, the context of Division I intercollegiate athletics as well as the financial resources associated with college sports is mainly driven by the economic support of television networks. Therefore, each athletic revenue source is discussed within the context of the traditionally consistent support from television. The second sector under financial factors is an examination of institutional revenue sources that may benefit from athletic success: alumni giving, economic impact on the community, and admissions. The final section is a brief breakdown of the most recent financial study performed by Fulks of the different divisions within intercollegiate athletics.

#### *Division I Membership and Conference Affiliation*

Becoming a member of Division I allows the institution to receive revenue from the NCAA revenue distribution plan. Each year, the NCAA divides up the revenues earned and distributes monies to individual members and conferences within Division I. Much of the NCAA revenue is distributed from the 11-year, \$6 billion deal with CBS for the Division I men's basketball tournament and other miscellaneous championship events (Marchiony, 1999). Distribution is not based solely on athletic performance, but also on other areas such as levels of academic performance, students' special needs fund, and

establishment of programs and services (NCAA On-line, 2005b). Institutions that are considering reclassifying to Division I certainly study the additional revenue support that is gained. Most importantly, the revenue that has been distributed is growing. In 1999-2000, the NCAA distributed close to \$182,000,000 to Division I members. In five years time, the NCAA increased the revenue distribution pool to over \$280,000,000 (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2004d).

Once a school becomes a member of Division I, it becomes imperative to align yourself with the best possible athletic conference. Recently schools have aligned themselves to form “super conferences”, as large as 12 institutions with the hopes of capturing a larger percentage of the television market. Studies show that as television markets increase, Division I membership revenue distribution scales also increase (Fatsis, 2004).

To highlight this point, *Fortune* magazine used the Division I-A University of Texas Longhorn football program as an example. The article examined the various revenue streams created directly and indirectly for the University by the football program. The University of Texas is a member of the Big Twelve Conference, which is consistently among the best athletic conference in Division I. The author, Robert Johnson (1999) referred to the University of Texas Longhorn football program as a “Grade A cash cow” because of the football program’s ability to bring in an enormous amount of revenue (p. 161). Not surprising is that a majority of their revenue stream is a direct result of the massive television contracts and their conference affiliation in the Big

12. In an interview conducted by Suggs (2003), William Bradshaw the athletic director at Temple University stated that:

Your conference affiliation can be closely related to your brand image. Conference affiliation can be very important in areas like fund raising, enrollment management, marketing and promotion, corporate sponsorships, and a myriad of other areas that are so essential to the lifeblood of the university. (p. 41)

Perhaps the greatest example of the impact conference affiliation has can be seen by comparing conferences that compete in football for the Bowl Championship Series against those that do not.

#### *The Bowl Championship Series*

The difference in revenues between Division I-A and I-AA, I-AAA is mainly due to the lucrative television contracts aligned with the football programs that are a member of the Bowl Championship Series (BCS) conferences. The Bowl Championship Series, which operates independently from the NCAA, was established before the 1998 season to determine the national champion for college football. Theoretically, the BCS matches the best football teams at season's end from the six conferences classified as a BCS eligible (<http://www.bcsfootball.org/>). The 12 BCS conferences are made up of 117 teams that represent Division I-A. However, not all 117 teams are equally eligible to play for the BCS national championship, based on their conference affiliation and criteria established by the BCS Founding Members (see Appendix B for criteria).

The 2005 revenue distribution illustrates the example in disparities between BCS institutions and non-BCS institutions. In 2005, members of the six conferences that make up the BCS Founding Membership divided up over \$86,000,000 in revenue. The other

five Division I-A conferences (Conference USA, Mid-American, Mountain West, Sun Belt, and Western Athletic) divided \$4.9 million in revenues. Moving further down the ladder, the eight Division I-AA football conferences each received \$200,000 in revenue from the BCS (Bowl Championship Series, 2005).

Teams and conferences participating in Bowl Championship Series games receive revenues driven by large television deals such as from ABC Sports, which agreed to pay \$76.5 million over four-years (2003-2006) to the BCS. Fox Television Network will replace ABC as broadcaster of college football's Bowl Championship Series under a four-year deal worth a reported \$80 million (Clark, 2004). The agreement, gives Fox exclusive rights to broadcast the Fiesta, Orange and Sugar Bowls from 2007 to 2010, as well as the yet-to-be-named national championship game from 2007 to 2009. ABC will keep the Rose Bowl and pay the BCS a reported \$300 million for 10 games from 2007-2014 (USA Today, 2004).

### *Sponsorships*

Research has demonstrated that fielding competitive and winning teams may also generate increased revenues in the form of corporate sponsorship revenues (Dodd, 1997; Lords, 1999). Sponsorship can be defined as the relationship between a sponsor and the university in which the sponsor pays cash, gifts-in-kind, or a combination of cash and trade in return for access to the exploitable commercial property associated with the university (Stotlar, 2000). The sport industry, including college athletics has witnessed a tremendous growth in corporate sponsorship dollars through the late 90's and into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. However, the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, and college presidents' concern about

over commercialization, reduced corporate sponsorship spending temporarily (MacMillian, 2003). Sponsors, such as Coca-Cola, that shied away have since come back to the NCAA with big support. Coca-Cola is in the third year of a groundbreaking \$500-million deal with the National Collegiate Athletic Association. The contract gives Coke 11 years to exclusively advertise and promote its beverages at 87 championships in 22 sports, including the valued Division I men's basketball tournament (Williams, 2004, A40).

At individual campuses, the sponsors remain attracted to the major college football and basketball programs. In 2001, Division I athletic departments acquired approximately \$158 million in sponsorship revenue. The 117 Division I-A athletic programs averaged sponsorship revenues of \$1.13 million, or 83.6% of the \$158 million acquired by all of Division I. The remaining Division I-AA and I-AAA universities averaged sponsorship revenues of \$142,000 and \$103,000, respectively (Fulks, 2002). The significance behind the figures indicates that if an institution is participating in major college football and basketball, then the ability to attract corporate sponsorship and dollars becomes a great revenue source.

#### *Alumni giving*

Many recent studies suggest that there is a positive correlation between increased contributions and athletic success. Grimes and Chressanthis (1994) found a positive relationship between overall winning percentages of the three major athletic programs (basketball, baseball, and football) and donations at one institution. Tucker (2004) found that a highly successful football team has a positive impact on the alumni giving rate. In

a study by Stinson and Howard (2004) evidence indicated a winning athletics program may significantly impact alumni giving behavior. However, an increased giving to athletics was linked to a decline in academic fundraising at the same institution. Robert Frank, a Cornell University economist, reviewed the links among college athletic success and donations and found that the philanthropic benefit is overstated. Although schools sometimes reap gains from winning athletic programs, the gains are usually very small and are greatly outweighed by the huge costs to obtain athletic success (NCAA On-line, 2004).

#### *Economic Benefit*

One of the greatest indirect costs cited by institutions for a reclassification to Division I is the tremendous economic benefit Division I sports would bring to the surrounding community (Cross, 1999). An economic impact analysis, which is the economic benefits that accrue to a community due to the addition of a facility, event, program, or team, has been used to study the advantages from intercollegiate athletics (Howard & Crompton, 2004).

The Semoon and Canode (2002) study is a summary of a university report that measured the potential economic impact of a football program the University of South Alabama was considering developing at the Division I-A level. Although it is only one study, the authors point out that before making any decisions, the University of South Alabama relied on other economic studies completed at the University of Alabama, University of Southern Mississippi, the Penn State, to suggest that big football Saturdays would be a big boost for the local economy (Semoon & Canode, 2002).

Economic impact studies have also been performed on schools and events outside of Division I. Division III school Salisbury University was the subject of the economic impact study completed by Dr. Michael Vienna (2003). The author concluded that the economic impact of the Salisbury University athletics program on the local community was over \$1 million. In 2005, the Division II Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) men's and women's basketball tournament held in Raleigh, North Carolina registered a record-breaking "\$12 million economic impact, more than 27,000 hotel nights and better than \$1 million in local taxes" according to figures released by the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau (George, 2005, p. B1).

Howard and Crompton (2004) warn that studying the economic impact of intercollegiate athletics can be misleading because it is an "inexact process and output numbers should be regarded as a best guess rather than as being inviolably accurate" (p. 109). In addition to flawed numbers, Hudson (2001) suggests skepticism when viewing economic impact analysis due to the integrity of the consulting firm hired by the party eager to upgrade athletics. He suggests that the extravagant claims of a tremendous economic boost can be errors made from a lack of understanding, but can also be deliberate used to "generate large numbers that support the advocates' position and misleads other stakeholders" (p. 25).

### *Admissions*

Studies also suggest that the admissions office will receive a benefit from a successful athletic season, both in terms of quality of students and the number of students accepted. Mixon, Trevino, and Minto (2004) examined 68 Division I football schools

and found an increase in winning percentage equaled a slight increase in applicants received. Tucker and Amato (1993) found that a highly ranked football team boosted SAT scores. In a quantitative study completed by Toma and Cross (1998), notable increases were found in admission applications received – both in actual numbers and more importantly, relative to peer institutions – in the year following a championship season. In addition to the actual financial increase in student enrollment and fees, increased recognition in a championship season also can improve public perception of the university. Being associated with a winner is a social factor that higher education administrators identify as a very important factor in playing at the Division I level.

Franks (2004) acknowledges that athletics is similar to a national advertising campaign that will encourage some applicants but possibly not a better pool of applicants. Winning schools, for example, don't see increases in their applicants' SAT scores. Franks suggests athletic success probably helps in the “search phase” but not the “choice phase” (p 13).

#### *Examination of Revenues and Expenses*

Financial data collected by Fulks (2003) suggests that revenues and expenses continue to rise in all divisions (see Appendix C). The only level that is seeing a surplus continues to be Division I-A (BCS conference) schools. The average surplus at Division I-A has grown from \$1,900,000 to 2,200,000. Additionally, the deficit seen at all other levels has decreased, with the greatest improvement at the Division I-AA level. In 2001 the average Division I-AA deficit was \$1,200,000; while in 2003 the average deficit was reduced to \$300,000 (Fulks, 2003).

A closer examination of the revenues show that ticket sales remain, by far, the most significant revenue source in Division I-A at 27 % of all revenue (Fulks, 2003). This is certainly an important figure because when ticket sales remain strong at the Division I-A level, many other revenue streams, such as concessions, sponsorships, merchandise, and donations should rise. Revenue from alumni/booster contributions accounted for more than \$5,200,000 per institution or 18 percent of all revenue at Division I-A schools.

Ticket sales and alumni/booster contributions at most Division I schools are now intertwined with a personal seat license or a point system that allows the highest contributor to purchase the most tickets and the best seats. This system would support the research that there is a positive relationship with winning and an increase in fundraising if one believes the hypothesis that fans are more likely to buy season tickets if the team is winning. Under the point system, a fan cannot buy tickets without a predetermined contribution to the institution, nor would they necessarily want to buy tickets if the team was expected to do poorly. Therefore, a team that experiences prolonged success would sell more tickets, which would then increase additional revenue streams to the institution (Hall & Mahoney, 1997).

Direct institutional support, which made up 10 percent of revenue sources at Division I-A schools, represents a transfer of funds from one institutional budget unit to another and is, therefore, not a “actual” athletic revenue source. Student activity fees accounted for six percent of total revenues in Division I-A (Fulks, 2003).

In comparison, Division I-AA schools relied heavily on direct institutional support for revenue, as it accounted for the greatest revenue source at 49 percent. The second highest revenue source for Division I-AA schools was also internal, as student activity fees accounted for 18 percent of all revenue. Direct institutional support was also the number one revenue source in Division I-AAA at 45 percent, with student activity fees second at 27 percent (Fulks, 2003).

A noticeable difference between Division I-A and I-AA and I-AAA is the amount of revenue generated by Division I-A schools based on external revenue sources, such as ticket sales and booster clubs. As schools become more self-sufficient and generate their own revenue, a decrease in institutional support should occur. Schools at the lower levels are unable to generate a high level of external support and therefore must rely on the institution and the students for their main source of revenue.

Football schools in Division II reported an average of 57 percent of total revenue from direct institutional support and 15 percent from student activity fees, while the non-football schools reported 61 percent from direct institutional support and 15 percent from student activity fees. Thus, while ticket sales remain the primary source of revenue for Division I-A schools, reliance on the institution and the students was a much more significant revenue source in the other divisions (Fulks, 2003).

In all divisions, the two expense categories of salaries and benefits and student-athlete grants-in-aid accounted for at least half of total operating expenditures. With the exception of Division I-A, these two expense items made up more than 60 percent of total expenses. Student-athlete grants-in-aid in Division I-A were 18 percent of total expenses

and salaries and benefits 32 percent. On average, Division I-AA schools reported that salaries and benefits comprised 32 percent of total expenses and student-athlete grants-in-aid 35 percent. Division I-AAA schools reported, on average that salaries and benefits equated to 30 percent of total expenses while student-athlete grants-in-aid made up 32 percent. Division II football sponsoring schools reported salaries and benefits making up 31 percent of total expenses and student-athlete grants-in-aid making up 39 percent. Finally, for Division II non-football sponsoring schools, salaries and benefits equated to 33 percent of total operating expenses and grants-in-aid was 39 percent (Fulks, 2003).

#### Gaps in the Literature

Much of the research regarding intercollegiate athletics focuses on major Division I-A athletic departments. Within each factor described in the literature review, more research needs to be gathered on the Division I-AA, I-AAA, II, III levels, as well as junior college athletics and athletic programs in the NAIA. The subject of reclassification of a lower division to Division I usually receives little attention, and virtually no research. The reason appears to be most schools that reclassify to Division I from Division II or III rarely make the jump to Division I-A or BCS conferences. However, the trends of schools that are reclassifying to Division I-AA or I-AAA appears to remain constant and therefore an examination of these schools is necessary.

The historical literature provides a detailed timeline in the growth of big-time college athletics, especially Division I football and men's basketball. However, little historical data has been gathered to give a sense of the growth in other divisions, particularly in historical trends, such as the reclassification from a lower division to

Division I. Research also needs to be conducted to examine the importance of athletic events, traditions, and the institution's historical profile has any impact on intercollegiate athletics on all levels.

Philosophically, more research needs to be done to analyze Division I-AA and I-AAA schools and their commitment to the Division I philosophy, which seems to emphasize the desires of "big-time athletics". Similarly, it is important to study current changes in the philosophies of Division II and III to identify patterns that imitate the Division I philosophy.

A quantitative financial study in the current environment of Division I-AA and lower seems to reveal the same message: athletic departments continue to lose money. Therefore, in order to provide insightful research using financial data, new techniques and different economic variables need to be examined.

Research has been completed that both supports and rejects a move to Division I based strictly on financial numbers. Research associated with the financial factors can be very inaccurate, depending on how data were collected. More detailed case studies may reveal the financial windfall or loss based on the numerical data as well as the impact on university profile, new facilities on campus, increased publicity, and increased perception of wealth from alumni and students. Financially speaking, it appears as though higher education research has not identified how to measure all decisions fiscally. Therefore, it is important to look at the entire picture to gain a true understanding of the dollars associated with such a transition.

Another gap in the literature is the lack of longitudinal studies regarding reclassification. Much of the research utilizes case studies, interviews, and/or document analysis; however all of them offer only an historical perspective along with a current snapshot of the university's athletic department. Follow up research should be conducted to determine if the factors given led to any type of athletic or university success. Research needs to examine whether factors given by schools that completed the transition were in fact found to be solid indicators of success. This type of research is much needed for schools that are considering a reclassification and have identified similar factors. Major decisions to reclassify an athletic department would be better made because administrators would depend more on current research rather than on emotional or social pressure from their constituents.

Further investigation is also needed to examine private or religious affiliated universities who transition to Division I. A large majority of the research is gathered from state institutions that have moved up to Division I. This new research would allow other types of schools (other than state schools) to develop their own factors for moving to Division I. For example, potential research could examine whether bringing attention to your religious organization is a factor for moving to Division I or research could identify whether factors are similar regardless of the type of institution.

Intercollegiate athletics has been described as the "front door to the rest of campus" thus, a thorough understanding of why reclassification continues to occur and how it impacts the future of higher education is important. To do so, an organizational

change perspective first described by the works of Pettigrew (1985a) known as the contextualist approach, has been chosen as my theoretical framework.

### Theoretical Framework

The following section addresses three important areas used to provide rationale for the contextualist approach: (a) the history of organizational change theory as well as the prevalent organizational change theories that have previously been used to study sport organizations: population ecology, resource dependence theory, institutional theory, and social identity theory; (b) preliminary data; (c) an examination of the contextualist approach which has been chosen as the theoretical framework used to study the reclassification to Division I at two institutions, and (d) conceptual model.

For many years the prevailing models of organizational change were described by Chin and Benne (1985) as linear processes consisting of a progression of steps that include diagnosing problems in organizations, developing solutions to these problems, identifying resistance to the change that would be needed to implement these solutions, formulating and implementing a change strategy, and monitoring and reviewing the change process. However, over the last two decades new theoretical developments for studying organizational change have arisen. Many researchers have observed that organizational change is not as linear as once described (Pettigrew, 1985a; Slack, 1997). Individual change agents, as well as political, social, and economic influential fluctuations impact an organization's ability and desire to change. Therefore, the concept of change within the organization is much more complicated and constantly evolving. Thus, the goal is to identify and utilize a theory that takes this dynamic understanding of

change into account. To determine a theory for thoroughly examining intercollegiate athletics it is necessary to first critique other organizational change theories.

*Population ecology*

The population ecology approach to understanding organizations and the strategy to change is based on the Darwinian notion of survival of the fittest (Ulrich, 1987). The idea behind the population ecology approach or the natural selection is that organizations survive if they are able to exploit their environment for resources. Over time, the demands of the environment will change, forcing the sport organization to change with it. Sport organizations will have to change their structure, products, and services to meet the new demands. If the organization can not adjust, they will fail. Those that can successfully change will survive (Slack, 1997).

Population ecologists also emphasize the concept of isomorphism, or the process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions. According to Hannan and Freeman (1977), the similarity of organizations can occur either because “non-optimal forms are selected out of a community of organizations or because organizational decision makers learn optimal responses and adjust organizational behavior accordingly” (p. 939). In accordance with this proposal is the notion of an environment that actively constructs organizational processes. This line of thinking is consistent with the overall frame of natural selection in that conflict among organizations leads to competition for scarce resources. Those organizations that can efficiently and effectively gather and use those resources survive and become models for other organizations.

*Strengths and limitations of population ecology.*

The population ecology approach has potential to increase our understanding of the intercollegiate athletic structure and change process in sport organizations. In particular, the population ecology approach is effective when studying populations or organizations in order to identify success in a particular market or niche. However, when applying the population ecology approach to intercollegiate athletics, particular to the reclassification process, there are several limitations.

First, population ecology assumes that the environment is highly deterministic, in that the environment is the sole factor for determining effectiveness. As previously stated, the environment constructs processes to be successful. Consequently, the environment of intercollegiate athletics does not appear to be as deterministic as once thought. In other words, findings demonstrate that forces once thought to highly influence the structure and processes of athletic departments (i.e., competition for available resources, pressures from outside sources such as alumni or the NCAA) do not affect these departments as much as the choices made by key personnel within the organization (Cunningham & Ashley, 2001). Second, population ecology takes no account of managerial actions. Administrative decisions and leadership has become a central issue in studying change in intercollegiate athletics, as critics of intercollegiate athletics are calling on boards of trustees, presidents, administrators, and faculty to become more involved in the decision making process of college sports. The key to this theoretical standpoint is that organizations are coerced into change by pressures from the environment, rather than strategic change by leadership within the organization (Smith,

Evans, & Westerbeek, 2005). Last, survival is the only measure of organizational effectiveness (Slack, 1997). If an organization survives, it is deemed successful, and if the organization perishes, it fails. One could argue that intercollegiate athletic programs have as a whole experienced many failures; still college athletics continue to prosper. Intercollegiate athletics and its membership are not in danger of extinction, therefore, based on the population ecology theory it would be deemed a success.

### *Resource Dependence*

Resource dependence theory is based on the belief that organizations engage in transactions with other organizations within their environment. Based on the work of Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) organizations cannot exist in isolation; but rather interlock with each other, obtaining resources needed to survive. Essentially, the organizations are unable to exist without dependence on their environment for resources that become critical for success.

Managing change becomes a critical component of the resource dependence theory because, as Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), point out, “environments can change, new organizations enter and exit, and the supply of resources becomes more or less scarce” (p.3). Managers reduce their inability to exist by responding to the environmental factors, working with other organizations, and diversifying their products to meet current needs.

Resource dependence theory has been used to study many types of sport organizations. Slack and Hinings (1992) illustrated how Canadian national sport organizations, which relied on the federal government for much of their resources,

changed aspects of their organization to meet requirements established by Sport Canada, which is a branch of the Canadian government established to support and advance Canadian sport organizations. Kerby's (2003) study utilized an intrinsic case study methodology to apply resource dependence theory and institutional theory to analyze the expansion of pitching rosters by Major League Baseball teams. In intercollegiate athletics, interdependence has become necessary for organizations to succeed in the ever-changing environment. Due to the NCAA structure and current environmental conditions, Baxter and Lambert (1990) suggest that resource dependence theory provides a valuable lens to examine intercollegiate athletics. The study concluded that competition among members strongly affects supervision and sanctioning activities in the NCAA regulatory networks, which support the resource dependence theory.

Member institutions rely heavily on each other to create and distribute a product that allows athletic departments to survive. In addition, each institution relies heavily on resources provided by the NCAA and the environment created by the governing structure (Lawrence 1987). Finally, Sperber (1990) suggests that athletic departments rely heavily on resources provided by the institutions from student fees, transfer payments, and other institutional revenue streams. The institution in turn, relies on the athletic department to generate new revenue streams through ticket sales, television revenue, sponsorships and merchandising.

*Strengths and limitations of resource dependence.*

Resource dependence theory is primarily concerned with controlling resources needed by others and reducing dependence on others for resources. As an organizational

theory, resource dependent explanations of activities and events are also based primarily on the economic function of the athletic program. As important as the economic and financial functions are to a successful reclassification, it is not the only function within the reclassification process that needs to be addressed.

Resource dependence theory does not account for educational concerns, philosophical factors, and the importance of historical decisions that have shaped the current program (Cross, 1999). The resource dependence perspective argues that business relationships such as cartels and trade associations limit economic uncertainty and limits competition. Cross (1999) and Baxter and Lambert (1990) have used aspects of resource dependence theory to suggest that the NCAA and its members operate as a cartel to maintain financial success. However, by viewing the reclassification of an athletic department through the resource dependence theory, restrictions of other factors, such as managerial leadership and internal organizational structure, would occur.

#### *Institutional theory*

Institutional theory argues that inter-organizational relations are structured around “rationalizing myths” that validate those relations and facilitate exchange with the environment (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). Since Meyer and Rowan, many researchers have examined the impact of the institutional environment on an organization’s structure (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Oliver, 1991; Tolbert, 1985; Zucker, 1987). Meyer and Scott (1991) defined institutional theory as the study of the normative understandings and behaviors that constitute the environment in which an organization functions. The theory is grounded in the belief that organizations change their formal structure to conform to

environmental expectations regarding appropriate organizational design. Organizations subjected to the same expectations exhibit isomorphism, eventually operating within a similar structure.

Similar to the resource dependence theory which emphasizes the efficient use of resources within an evolving environment, institutional theory highlights the importance of symbolic resources that build legitimacy in a competitive environment. The environment, which is monitored by regulatory agencies, shapes and defines what is a “necessary way to organize” (Slack, 1997, p. 216). The prevailing myth that legitimates intercollegiate athletics is that college athletes are amateurs who engage in sport for the benefit of competition, as well as the education, physical, mental, or social benefit (NCAA 1988a).

*Strengths and limitations of institutional theory.*

Institutional theory provides a broad base for which to study intercollegiate athletics. The flexibility to provide explanations to a wide range of changes suggests this as a possible perspective to study the reclassification process. Cross (1999), suggests that unlike resource dependence theory, the institutional perspective captures the philosophical and social aspects of organizational change. Furthermore, one institutional theorist suggests that organizations are influenced by much more than profit-making:

Institutional theory emphasizes that organizations are open systems – strongly influenced by their environments – but that it is not only rational or efficiency-based forces that are at work. Socially constructed belief systems and normative rules exercise enormous control over organizations – both how they are structured and how they work (Scott, 1999, p.117).

Finally, institutional theory allows personalities and personal motivations to enter the discussion, but not as an explanation to change but rather as a character to change. Powell (1991) states that an institutional theory does not ignore human actions, however the point of an institutional explanation is to move from personal factors to institutional ones.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) discussed institutional theory based on the eventual result of isomorphism. The primary focus of institutional theory is on the movement towards, and the maintenance of, institutional norms through coercive, mimetic, and normative processes. In doing this, corporations and managers have ignored organizational diversity and how organizations change. As a result, institutional theory, generally, has had little to say on how and why institutional norms change (Powell 1991). Clearly, organizations and institutional norms change over time, but two fundamental questions remain largely unanswered: where does the impetus for change come from, and how might organizations respond to pressures for change?

Other reclassification studies have chosen to look at the process through the impact of the stakeholder. Tomasini used “social identity theory to possibly explain the motivations of reclassification” (p.18).

### *Social Identity Theory*

Social identity theory is concerned with "the part of the individual's self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership in a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1982, p.2). Human beings have a basic need for positive self-esteem, which is wrapped up in an

individual's identity (Hogg & Abrams, 1990). Individuals categorize themselves into social networks that are formed on the basis of common social identities. Social identities serve to distinguish us and those in our group from members of other groups. Individuals may raise their self-esteem and their perceived social identity by increasing their association with others they identify as highly successful (Brewer, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Many sport specific research has used the social identity theory as a framework to study identification with a team or program. The foundational sport study that examined fan identity was Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman, and Sloan (1976), which studied the effect of cognitions and affective reactions to football game outcomes. Cialdini et al., examined the strength of identification with a sports team after a loss and after a victory. Results suggest students are more likely to wear university-related apparel after a victory. They conclude that students attempt to associate themselves with a successful group in order to bolster their self-esteem. Snyder, Higgins, and Stuckey (1983) conducted a telephone survey with undergraduate students and found students were more likely to use *we* or *us* when referring to a football team win, and *they* and *them* when the team loses. This process is referred to as "basking-in reflected-glory" (BIRGing). In contrast, people may also try to maintain their self-esteem by disassociating themselves from an unsuccessful group. This is referred to as "cutting-off-reflected failure" (CORFing).

Understanding that sports are typically characterized by high levels of consumer commitment and emotional involvement (Sutton et al. 1999), many other studies have

attached the social identity theory to fan involvement. Underwood, Bond and Baer (2001) proposed that organizations can heighten their brand by building on consumer's need to be a part of the team. Specifically, firms should foster group experiences, establish and/or build on their unique history and traditions, initiate meaningful rituals and design physical facilities to build the process.

Sports customers (i.e., fans) often see the product (i.e. team) as an extension of themselves, making team success tantamount to personal success and, conversely, team failure akin to personal failure (Cialdini et al. 1976; Schafer 1969). Tomasini (2003) suggested that, "this may help explain why constituents or stakeholders of a university, even though they understand the possible negative financial ramifications to the department and the institution, seek Division I status.

*Strengths and limitations of social identity theory.*

Social identity theory has played an important role in shaping our understanding of fan association and identification (Cialdini et al, 1976; Laverie & Arnett, 2000; Snyder, Higgins, and Stuckey 1983; Sutton et al. 1999; Tomasini 2003; Underwood, Bond, & Baer 2001). The framework has been extremely useful in studying one stakeholder in the reclassification process, the avid fan. However, several limitations become apparent when utilizing this perspective to analyze the reclassification process.

First, the reclassification process involves numerous identities and various perspectives of social upward mobility. Defining all of the populations (fan, faculty, staff, booster, and administrator) is difficult because subjects may fall into several categories. This theory has not been used to study these other groups of individuals.

Second, timing of the study could drastically influence fan attachment, satisfaction, and involvement based on wins and losses at the time of the study. Laverie and Arnett (2000) suggested that these factors are likely to change over time, particularly over the course of a season. Third, the sample was limited to college students. Fans of college athletics need not be college students. In the context of some collegiate sports, such as women's basketball, the most avid fans may not necessarily be the student body. Other populations, who are also avid fans, need to be studied to better understand the complex dynamics of fan behavior.

After reviewing many possible theories that have been used to view intercollegiate athletics, the most appropriate perspective to address the research questions of the proposed project is the contextualist approach. The most significant aspect within this approach is the recognition that an organization's history will influence organizational change.

#### Pilot Study

Preliminary data were collected during a pilot study conducted at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). The pilot study was conducted by three researchers from spring 2002 until fall 2004. Since much of the research on intercollegiate athletic programs transitioning to Division I is relatively new (Cross, 1999; Schwarz, 1998; Tomasini, 2003) and still very limited, this pilot study served as the initial step to gaining a better understanding of the reclassification process. Maxwell (2004) suggests pilot studies can be useful in these situations because pilot studies can

serve “some of the same functions as prior research, but they can focus more precisely on your own concerns and theories” (p.56)

The purposes of the pilot study were to:

1. Gain a better appreciation of why UNCG reclassified, particularly to identify factors that UNCG used to justify the major financial investment needed to upgrade their athletic programs from Division III to Division I,
2. Attain an understanding of how UNCG reclassified, addressing specifically the process of officially moving to Division I, and
3. Develop a conceptual framework that would be used to shape future research on the phenomena of transitioning to Division I intercollegiate athletics.

First, a thorough examination of all archival records (newspaper articles, books, national publications) relating to the history of the University, the athletic program, and the transition of the athletic department was conducted. Second, informal conversations were conducted with numerous constituents on the UNCG campus in order to confirm details from the archival records and to identify the gatekeepers, those individuals who played the most significant roles in the transition. Subjects who could expand on the archival records and identify gatekeepers included current and former coaches, players, institution staff and administration, faculty, and current and former senior level administrators. The purpose of these initial conversations was to uncover more historical detail and eliminate any oversight in the identification of gatekeepers. The third stage of data collection was to conduct one-to-one, in person, semi-structured interviews with individuals representing athletic department personnel and administration/faculty

members. During the pilot study, each interview was conducted with an additional researcher present during the interview. Finally, additional University and personal documentation, such as minutes, memorandums, and personal notes, were also gathered during the interviews.

Content analysis was conducted to identify common themes. Categorical indexing was used to classify common themes or central ideas that emerged from the interviews.

The athletic department personnel interviewed (n=3) consisted of an administrator and two subjects that served as both coach and administrator during the reclassification. These two coaches/administrators worked in the athletic department before, during, and after the reclassification; one started working at UNCG immediately following the initial decision to reclassify and was employed in the intercollegiate athletics department through the entire reclassification and well after.

The administrator/faculty members (n=3) were chosen for similar reasons; each had been at the University before the transition began and remained throughout the process. One administrator/faculty member was chosen because of their participation in the faculty senate during the early stages of the reclassification. This faculty member also stayed very involved in the informal monitoring of the intercollegiate athletic department, often times writing critically against the change. The second administrator was interviewed because the subject was very outspoken about the reclassification and its impact on the University. The subject has been involved with numerous committees to study Division I athletics at UNCG. The third administrator/faculty member was asked

to participate because their career at UNCG originally began in the athletic department (at the time the subject served a dual position as athletic administrator and faculty) and was also asked by the Chancellor to conduct research on the possibility of moving to Division I, and to serve on several committees throughout the reclassification.

The data gathered produced many themes. The following section describes two key themes identified along with corresponding data used to support each theme.

1. The motivations to reclassify had very little to do with winning athletic championships. The decision to reclassify UNCG's intercollegiate athletics department was bigger than just athletic teams' successes and failures. It was based on non-athletic motivations, which needed to be identified. Publicly, the university leadership produced the following reasons why the reclassification needed to take place:

The committee developed specific rationales for the move, which included: (1) addressing student apathy; (2) increasing public awareness to help fight UNCG's "identity crisis" and (3) improving development efforts in hopes of bringing in more money to the University (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, p. 10).

Further clarification was provided by the interview subjects when asked about the motivation to reclassify. One athletic administrator spoke of underlying administrative motivations for the reclassification:

That's where people with the power decided we need to move it forward. Now the rationale that I was led to believe was that it was not an "athletic rationale". The Chancellor wished to have the institution that he was president at be one of the most visible – visible and popular institution – so he could in fact perpetuate his graduate school...His undergraduate program was nothing too necessarily write home about. So he wished to equate Division I so his undergraduate

program and so that his graduate program would be perceived as top shelf.  
(Subject Hartwick)

One administrator/faculty member felt that the reason to reclassify was not about the future of the athletics department or the University, but rather the University's past:

There was a mindset in the University leadership that they wanted to once and for all shed the image of this being a girl's school. It is not about sports, a lot of this got shrouded in sports, kinda got shrouded in math and science as well. (Subject Whitehall)

2. The impact of the reclassification was felt wider than just the athletics department personnel (administrators, coaches, student-athletes). Because the reclassification was not just about enhancing the athletic department, but rather a much larger institutional change, the impact was intended to affect the University community. Subjects most often commented on the impact to the student population:

The move to Division I was part of a master plan to increase its size and enhance student life. Its visibility, recognition...especially to the male students  
The purpose was in fact, to bring more and more gifted people into this program.  
(Subject Altamont)

Another subject who was both an administrator and faculty member suggested that the impact on students may have been felt before they even took a class at UNCG:

I see students, good students choosing this University as their first choice, rather than a back-up. I think athletics used to be a disability, the look of the campus used to be a disability in so many different ways. I would guess athletics has contributed to that, but to what extent, I have no idea. I think that students identify it as more a legitimate state university campus. As an academic it pains me to say that – even though I was a former coach, student-athlete, athletic administrator. I have always loved and supported intercollegiate athletics. But as

an academic, I hate to think it plays such an important role in the image of an institution. But I think in the long run it has helped UNCG. (Subject Syracuse)

A former administrator, now coach agreed:

For the University to be attractive to students, in that part of time in the early 80's, we felt that we were losing students to Appalachian, to Wilmington, to ECU. We weren't attracting the quality students. (Subject Altamont)

The impact on students was not all positive. In addition to an increase in student fees, the closeness and the relationships with student-athletes may have been sacrificed.

They (student-athletes) just don't have the time...they are pulled in so many different directions. I guess I am generalizing here, but they practice and play so much that they don't really have time to do other things. From the outside looking in...the pressure of the scholarship, to play, or whatever, shifts their priorities. I often wonder if they get the full college experience. They don't have time to get to know other students, and certainly not their faculty. ( Subject Syracuse)

The UNCG pilot study helped develop an understanding of the process of reclassifying to Division I, including the context in which the reclassification took place, and the wide array of constituencies impacted by the reclassification. A deeper appreciation of the campus wide impact intercollegiate athletics had at UNCG was discovered. Findings from the pilot study aided in the identification of interview subjects, improved the research questions and subsequent interview questions, and led to the organizational change theory drawn upon to better understand the reclassification thus shaping the conceptual framework.

Initially, the following larger study was going to focus heavily on the athletics department personnel that participated in the transition. However, findings from the pilot study revealed the need to approach the research from an organizational standpoint, thus additional interview subjects were identified. High level administrators that participated in the reclassification needed to be interviewed in order to understand the University logic for the move to Division I. Pilot study participants agreed that in order to understand the motivation and the reclassification impact, upper administration that were intimately involved in the decision making process needed to be interviewed.

As the impact of the reclassification became clearer, questions were added to address the *organizational* change rather than just the athletic change. Although the initial topic of identifying reasons for the reclassification remained in the revised questionnaire, probing questions were included to address the process of reclassifying, the historical significance of the reclassification, and the environment in which the reclassification took place. Depending on the person's role in the reclassification, questions were then asked regarding the change in their department culture and structure, and the impact on the department's constituency. This was done to expand upon the subject's expertise and gain more substance concerning the impact of the reclassification.

Originally, specific questions concerning how reclassification impacted athletic department personnel (administrators, coaches, and students) were at the forefront (see Appendix E). The preliminary thought was that the move was initiated from the athletics department to upper administration and then extended out to the UNCG community. The pilot study examined the reclassification from a mid to high-level athletic administrator

and coach perspective, because it was assumed that the motivation to reclassify started from those positions. The pilot study also examined the individual experience of the subject rather than focusing on the organizational perspective. Furthermore, this study identified other issues surrounding relationships between and the development of student-athletes, coaches, and administrators as a result of the reclassification.

One of the most important findings of the pilot study was that in order to truly understand reclassification, additional research needed to be conducted regarding the context in which the transition took place. The original theory that this move was athletic department driven was incorrect. The reclassification at UNCG was not primarily driven by hopes of athletic notoriety, rather as a representation from upper administration to the UNCG constituency that the institution was changing from the University it was (women's college, teaching centered, regional student base) to an institution that emphasized a "bigger is better" identity, symbolic to a major state university. In addition, UNCG administrators felt the pressure of differentiating itself from other institutions in the North Carolina system and other southeast regional institutions. UNCG's transition to Division I needed a wider view, which meant the development of a conceptual framework that would allow research to capture the phenomenon as it related to the individual, the department, the campus, the region, and beyond.

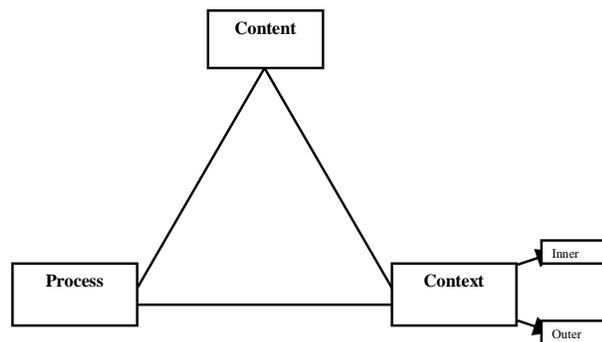
#### Contextualist Approach

Because change in sport organizations is rapid and the definition and management of change is different from institution to institution, it is vital to allow the process of reclassification to be examined from a broad perspective. Researchers such as Pettigrew

(1985a); Laughlin (1991); and Greenwood and Hinings (1996) propose sophisticated conceptual approaches for understanding and affecting change. Pettigrew (1987) suggests that change is best studied through a “multilevel analysis of change over long periods of time” (p.51). Emanating from this concept is a perspective of organizational change called the contextualist approach.

The contextualist approach calls for the examination of three dimensions related to change: process, content, and context (divided into inner and outer context). Pettigrew (1987) depicts the interaction among the three elements by placing each at the corner of a triangle (Figure 3.1). Because the approach considers a wide range of dimensions, this allows for the research to be exploratory in nature. Each dimension of Pettigrew’s contextualist approach is described in greater detail in the following sections.

**Figure 3.1: Pettigrew’s Contextualist Model**



### *Process*

Pettigrew (1987) describes the term process as it “refers to the actions, reactions, and interactions from the varied interested parties as they seek to move the organization from its present to its future state” (pp.657-658). An analysis of the process, using the

contextualist approach will address the “how” of change. The process itself is seen as a continuous, interdependent series of events that are being used to clarify the origins, maintenance, and result of some phenomenon. According to Pettigrew (1985, 1987), an understanding of process requires an analysis of the context, such as the social, political, and cultural elements that can shape the power relationships that structure the change, as well as the content.

### *Content*

Content refers to the “aspects of the organization that are being changed. The organization may be seeking to change technology, manpower, products, geographical positioning, or corporate culture” (Pettigrew, 1985, pp.657-658). Nelson (1999) refers to the content as the substance of change. An analysis of the process, using the contextualist approach will address the “what” of change. An analysis of content also requires a simultaneous examination of both process and context.

### *Context*

Context is separated into two categories, inner context and outer context. Pettigrew (1987) described inner context as those organizational elements that influence the change process. The ideas of change will pass through the inner context. The outer context refers to the “social, economic, political, and competitive environment in which the organization operates” (Pettigrew, 1985, p. 657). Much of the “why” of change is derived from an analysis of context, particularly the inner context. Nelson (1999) also notes that crucial to the contextualist approach is recognition of the interaction between

inner and outer environments, as well as the previously discussed relationship between the three concepts.

#### Adapted Conceptual Model

The following section applies Pettigrew's model to the following study. The adapted model (Appendix D) will be discussed using the same elements (process, content, context), as well as Pettigrew's definitions of those elements. Added to Pettigrew's model are arrows to highlight the interaction between the three elements. Although discussed throughout Pettigrew's work, relationship between the three concepts was only implied using the shape of the triangle. The arrows, however, emphasize a greater importance of the interaction between the three elements.

#### *Process*

Findings that focus on the process will help to better understand *how* the reclassification took place. Thus, examining how the university upgraded the athletic program will be crucial. In addition, this concept provides insight into subjects' actions, reactions and interactions before, during and after the reclassification. Identifying relationships and analyzing how these relationships evolved or disintegrated throughout the process of reclassification will also be important. This study examined relationships between upper administration and athletic administration, upper administration and faculty, staff and students, alumni and upper administration and the surrounding business community.

### *Content*

The content studied as a part of this case study included the constituencies that were affected by the reclassification. Those people included, but were not limited to: faculty, students (including student-athletes), staff, administrators, alumni, and the greater community. In addition, the case study allowed for the examination of whether the university and the athletic department, as products, have changed.

### *Context*

Influence before, during, and after the reclassification of athletics may be due to the inner context, such as the institution's management structure, on-campus traditions and cultures, the intercollegiate athletics history and culture, and political makeup of the University. Five external environments that may drastically influence the reclassification are the intercollegiate athletics environment, the higher education environment, the local community, the regional and state environment.

### Conclusions

The desire to create championship teams has become a phenomenon in college athletics, as higher education institutions try to stay or become more competitive. Some schools have made the decision to reclassify their athletic programs to Division I and therefore have committed a large amount of university resources in order to accomplish this massive task. Factors given by higher education administrators to justify the commitment to athletics have been broken down into three major categories: historical, philosophical, and financial. It is important to analyze each factor identified by schools that have transitioned since the mid 1980's to determine if indeed the factors given (i.e.

more revenue streams, increased student numbers, change college identity) did improve with the reclassification to Division I. The following study focuses on two schools that have reclassified since 1985 because the literature suggests that it was during this time that three significant events occurred to change the context of college athletics.

First, ESPN had established itself as a viable programming outlet for college sports (Freeman, 2000). Second, the 1984 Supreme Court ruling in the case of NCAA v. the University of Oklahoma, which stated that the NCAA's exclusive rights to television contracts violated federal antitrust laws (Worsnop, 1994), which allowed college football teams to negotiate their own deals with television networks. Third, in 1984 the NCAA men's basketball tournament expanded from 48 teams to 64 teams, which provided more teams an opportunity to receive national exposure.

It has been since 1985 that we have seen a consistent trend in the reclassification to Division I athletics from a lower division. Current literature also indicates that new schools have become provisional members, while other institutions are researching the possible move to Division I. As the move to Division I continues to be a popular, yet costly strategy, further research is needed to examine the organizational change of reclassification.

Three major categories were arranged to better understand the literature associated with reclassification. Through analyzing the literature and collecting empirical data, common themes, regardless of the institutions studied, seemed to be consistent. A change in athletics, such as transitioning from a lower division of intercollegiate athletics to Division I, meant a change in the institution. The decision to

reclassify was not only a decision that would impact athletic department personnel but stakeholders of the entire university. The historical, philosophical, and financial factors that have been identified in the literature review are justifications for the need to change the institution. Due to the numerous explanations within each category, it is important to look at reclassification through a contextual framework that captures the process, content, and context of such an organizational change.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to describe the process of reclassifying an athletic department to Division I and its impact on the institution and stakeholders. In-depth case studies were done at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Elon University.

Before justification is given to the case study method, it is important to discuss why a qualitative approach as opposed to a quantitative approach should be used to answer the central question. In addition, attention will be given to the case study methodology in relation to the contextualist approach.

First, the qualitative approach allowed the researcher to design the study so that questions and themes emerged, whereas with quantitative the design predetermines procedures before research commences. Researchers using the quantitative approach typically rely on prediction and controlled settings, using controlled variables, and having very little interaction with their subjects. Qualitative research is done in a natural setting, trying to capture real world experience, allowing for the emergence of numerous variables, plus researchers have extensive interaction with subjects (Henderson, 1991).

Qualitative research uses the researcher as the instrument and collects rich, deep explanations using words. Quantitative data uses physical instruments and statistical procedures to explain numbers. The outcomes for quantitative findings are in the form of generating or testing a hypothesis or supporting theory; while the outcome of qualitative research is explaining and describing themes. As Guba and Lincoln (1981) stated,

“Qualitative researchers empathize, describe, judge, compare, portray, evoke images, and create for the reader or listener a sense of having been there” (p.149). As Mason (2002) describes, qualitative research allows the researcher to engage the subject in order to develop arguments about how things work.

Qualitative research, in this particular research study, was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to best answer the central question. The central question and the subsequent research questions aimed to explain or better understand “what happened?”. The ability to identify intercollegiate athletics’ contributions to the educational mission of the institution was vital.

#### Justification for a Case Study

The case study approach was chosen because it allowed the researcher the ability to dig deep and identify, discover, and explain each university’s reclassification process. Case studies take the reader into the university setting with a vividness and detail not typically present in more analytical reporting formats (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The case study design permitted the exploration of a single phenomenon, reclassification of the athletic department, as a way to identify and clarify the relationship suggested by the literature. Schramm (1971) describes the essence of a case study by stating, “the central tendency among all types of case studies, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result” (p. 12).

Interviewing numerous constituents allowed different perspectives of the process itself and the lasting impact the process has had on their experience. Through one-on-one

interviewing the subject had the ability to provide feelings, emotions, conviction or disapproval; feelings that would go uncovered in quantitative research.

Finally, the contextualist approach to understanding the institutional changes that originated from moving athletic programs from a lower level division to Division I drew heavily on the detailed construction and analysis of case studies (Pettigrew, 1987). The overriding intention of this framework used in this project was to capture and understand the strategic change made at a university. The underlying philosophy of the contextualist approach is that strategic change should be regarded as a constant flow or “continuous process which occurs in the given context” (Pettigrew, 1985b, p.225). Pettigrew also states that it is “impossible to comprehend such changes as separate episodes divorced from their historical, organizational and economic circumstances from which they emerge (Pettigrew & Whipp, 1989, p.121).

According to Pettigrew (1987) organizational change does not move forward in a linear fashion that is easy to define and predict. Rather, it is a pattern that is seen as continuous and uncertain. Understanding that strategy should not be studied through a cross-sectional approach, rather as a “motion picture over time” allowing the researcher to understand the impact on the stakeholders from numerous time points and perspectives (p. 655).

This framework becomes more valuable as it applies to sport organizations because judgments about strategy are typically seen as short-term. Many times sport programs are managed based on immediate reactions to the present context. Current examples in sport include judging the success of a team based on the current year’s win-

loss record, the increased number of coaches hired and fired annually, and fluctuation of fan support. Using the contextualist approach to study organizational change, sport managers can make better informed decisions based on a broader perspective. Slack (1997) supports using contextualist approach when studying sport organizations because:

Unfortunately, no studies within sport management have used this approach. The richness of data which the contextualist approach can yield makes it a very viable method for enhancing our understanding of sport organizations. (p. 217)

### Study Design

A case study research design was utilized to address the research questions. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) and Elon University were chosen for several reasons. First, each university is located in the central North Carolina region. The close proximity and similar external environment (Piedmont Triad region) may be reasons that these particular institutions made similar decisions to reclassify. Second, many of the faculty, staff, and administrators, are still involved with each university, making it possible to locate and interview key informants. Even those subjects that were not employed at the university maintained professional or personal relationships with employees at each institution, thus locating those people that had since left was not a major obstacle. Third, each university maintained numerous forms of documentation, such as memorandums, articles, minutes, and letters regarding their reclassification. This provided the researcher with a very rich dataset from which to gather important information.

Fourth, each institution, although similar in location, provides vast differences within their institution and their athletic programs. The most prominent differences are the following: the University of North Carolina at Greensboro is a large (enrollment of 15,306 in the fall of 2005) public institution (UNCG Fact Book, 2005). Early studies (Cross, 1999; Toma & Cross, 1998), analyzed the reclassification of public schools to Division I, due mostly to the fact that at the time, only four private schools had reclassified. Since that time, more private schools have reclassified, or are in the process of reclassifying, which may suggest a new trend in reclassification. Therefore, this study also examined a smaller (enrollment of 4,956 in the fall of 2005) private institution, Elon University (Elon University Fact Book, 2005). Because Elon University has a football program, they have reclassified to Division I-AA, whereas UNCG did not reclassify with football and are at the Division I-AAA level. Overall, each institution has a very different institutional profile and rich history, which will be described in greater detail in the results section.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, each institution had been established as a Division I program for 5 or more years. Specifically, UNCG has now been a Division I program for 16 years and Elon for eight years. This allowed for approximately 10-20 years of historical data on each.

The two schools chosen are also a sub sample of the 55 schools that have reclassified from a lower division to Division I during 1985-2005. Although other schools could have been included in this study, by limiting the sample to two it allowed

for a deeper exploration of each institution. A listing of all schools that have reclassified, along with some descriptive data, is shown in Appendix A.

### Data Collection

Data collection for this study evolved from the researcher's experience in intercollegiate athletics, previous research on reclassification, and the pilot study. A combination of qualitative techniques was used to complete the case study (Table 1). Yin (2003) described sources of evidence for case studies: documents, archival records, interviews, participant and direct observations, and physical artifacts. Throughout the study, all of these sources of evidence were used to collect data.

Table 1. - Data Collection Criteria

<b><u>Methods</u></b>	<b><u>Criteria</u></b>	<b><u>Connection to Research</u></b>
1. Document (i.e., administrative documents, newspaper articles, books, letters)	1. Did it provide information on the context, content, or process of reclassification?*	Documents found had to address the topic of reclassification, or other organizational changes before, during, or after the reclassification process. Also read and reviewed documents discussing any major events at each institution.
	2. Did it provide new leads to other organizational changes?	
	3. Did it provide new leads to other documents?	
	4. Did it identify new interview subjects?	
2. Archival records (i.e., organizational budgets, charts, lists, records, facility maps, seating charts)	Same as document	Same as document
3. Observations - participant as observer at UNCG; observer-as-participant at Elon (on-campus observations, athletic events, meetings, )	1. Do observations help establish current context?	Establishment of Division I feel (noticeable athletic logos, colors; student participation in athletic events) Student behavior

4. Physical Artifacts (i.e., facility and stadiums, displays of athletic victory/success-trophies)	1. Does artifact suggest importance of athletics at institution?	Establish the context or athletic environment at the institution.
5. Interviews	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does this person have intimate knowledge regarding the rationale provided for reclassification?</li> <li>2. Was this person privy to top level conversations about the purpose of moving to Division I?</li> <li>3. Is this person able to be interviewed?</li> <li>4. Could this person provide additional notes, memorandums, letters, articles that related to the reclassification?</li> <li>5. Could this person provide other interview subjects that would be appropriate for the study?</li> <li>6. Was this person associated with the school for the majority (if not all) of the reclassification? A targeted effort was made to find subjects associated with the school before, during, and after the reclassification.</li> </ol>	Findings elucidate both process and content as they relate to the reclassification

\* Based on definitions from modified model

To avoid potential restrictions due to limited sources, Yin (2003) and Creswell (1998) recommend that numerous forms of information be gathered from documents and archival records such as letters, minutes, university proposals, budgets, campus publications, planning documentation, and brochures.

First, a thorough examination was required of all available archival records and documentation relating to the history of the athletic programs and the transition of the athletic department. Archival records and data were collected from universities' libraries, archives, athletic department records, and university websites. Assistance was received at both institutions from the school archivist. The initial examination of archival records and documentation was to learn more about the reclassification itself, and identify potential subjects.

Once preliminary data were gathered about each institution (historical facts, institutional profile, dates of reclassification, initial reaction to the potential move, general athletic department press releases), data were re-examined to narrow down potential informants.

Informal conversations and interviews were then conducted with numerous constituents on each of the campuses to identify the gatekeepers or those individuals who played the most significant roles in the transition. Stakeholders who were able to identify gatekeepers included current and former coaches, players, institution staff and administration, faculty and current and former senior level administrators. The purpose of this first stage of interviews was to confirm the documentation gathered about potential interviewees and reduce researcher bias and oversight in the identification of gatekeepers.

The next stage of data collection was to conduct one-to-one, in person, semi-structured interviews with individuals (N=11 at Elon, N=11 at UNCG) representing the following groups: athletic department administration, senior level administrators, and top

level administrators/faculty members outside the athletic department. Some participants represented one or more of the identified groups. For example, one subject was employed by the university as a coach and was promoted to administrator during the reclassification. Regardless, each subject must have held a major role in the reclassification process. More specifically, each interviewee must have been involved or have intimate knowledge of the organizational change of transitioning the athletic program to Division I. At UNCG, the five additional subjects were two top-level administrators, two senior-level administrators, and one athletic administrator. At Elon University, subjects interviewed were six top-level administrators, three athletic administrators, and two senior level administrators. To ensure accuracy, all interviews were audio recorded. Tapes were transcribed verbatim and coded by the interviewer.

A total of 11 interviews were conducted at Elon and 5 interviews were conducted, in addition to the pilot study at UNCG, for a total of eleven subjects. A semi-structured interview lasting approximately 60 minutes was conducted with each subject. An interview protocol was established and maintained to ensure that all areas of interest were covered. The research questions were developed in three distinct phases: questions that addressed before the reclassification process, during the reclassification process and after the reclassification process (see Appendix F). During each interview phase, questions were asked based on Pettigrew's model of the contextual approach. More specifically, questions were asked to gain a thorough understanding of the process, the content, and the context in which the transition took place. Questions were asked after the introduction and once the subject's role in the reclassification process was confirmed.

Secondary questions were added to each interview based on information gathered during document analysis and previous interviews. Questions were also tailored to that particular interviewees' strengths and experience. Each subject was given the opportunity to speak freely on any topic related to the reclassification. Informed consent was obtained through oral and written consent forms. All research protocols were approved by the UNCG and Elon University Institutional Review Boards.

A semi-structured interview approach was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to stay focused on the two primary research questions, but also it permitted the interview to adapt to the informant's areas of expertise or change direction based on responses. This natural flow of the interview was important because it allowed the subject the freedom to speak critically and liberally, in a non-threatening environment on their views of the organizational change. This allowed for important topics to be uncovered that perhaps would have been overlooked.

Each subject was given the opportunity to review transcripts of their interview in order to clarify an existing point or add new information. Subjects were also given the opportunity to detract information given. The researcher also clarified specific points with certain subjects, and in some specific cases, re-interviewed subjects (N=2 at Elon, N=2 at UNCG).

Many subjects maintained personal notes, memorandums, meeting minutes, and other institution documentation, which was provided at the time of the interview. Additional archival records and documentation discovered during the data collection became important for three main reasons: (a) to uncover additional background

information on the reclassification, (b) to be used to connect information gathered from other sources, such as interviews and observation, and (c) to confirm information already gathered.

Because sources of evidence may vary from institution to institution depending on record keeping, historical memory, and subject availability it was vital to follow all leads of information (Peterson & Spencer, 1993). Multiple sources of information allowed the researcher to assemble a wide range of concepts and also lend support to the researcher's claims. As Yin (2003) explains, the researcher's assertions gain strength if "converging lines of inquiry" point to the same conclusion (p. 92).

#### Data Analysis

Stake (1995) suggests that qualitative analysis is concerned with understanding the phenomena rather than stating an explanation; thus analysis of the data for each case study was to "tell the story" (p. 39). In an effort to do so, the analysis is guided by a strategy of thick, rich description.

Once all initial documentation was gathered, content analysis was performed on the archival records and institutional documents to identify prominent themes. Written documentation was also reviewed on an ongoing basis in order to better tailor questions to each specific informant. Each informant held a different role in the reclassification process, thus the written documentation served as a means for adding appropriate questions to highlight their individual experience. Content analysis of documentation was kept in an archival journal, which summarized each article and highlighted important themes based on the three constructs taken from Pettigrew's model: context (internal and

external), content, process. Each code was also connected back to research questions, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1984).

Once each interview was complete, audio tapes were transcribed and content analysis was performed on each transcription. To eliminate oversight, another content analysis was performed on each interview once all of the interviews were completed at each institution. The primary researcher utilized other researchers who are familiar with the reclassification and intercollegiate athletics research to perform a separate content analysis on each interview. Categorical indexing was used to classify common themes or central ideas that emerged from the interviews. Major themes were selected and agreed upon after further discussion among the research group. The themes from each interview were given back to the subject as a form of member check. All steps were completed to reduce known limitations when using categorical indexing (Gratton & Jones, 2004).

### Quality of the Research

#### *Limitations*

The following limitations identify potential weaknesses of this study:

1. The subjects interviewed throughout the study may not be individuals who were directly involved during the *entire* reclassification process; individuals have come and gone at different points during the reclassification and therefore could affect the accuracy of the data. Every attempt was made to identify and interview those subjects with the most familiarity of this particular organizational change.
2. The researcher brings over 10 years experience in intercollegiate athletics to the study, including employment in the athletic department for almost three years at the University

of North Carolina at Greensboro. The researcher was also an adjunct instructor at Elon University during the data collection phase, and has since become a fulltime instructor in the Leisure and Sport Management department. Therefore, eliminating affiliations, preconceived biases, and expectations of success are difficult.

### *Delimitations*

The following delimitations restrict the scope of this study:

1. The number of institutions that are being studied (N=2) was a small number, however, they each represent a public and a private institution, differing levels of Division I, and they vary in size. They were chosen to help best represent those schools that have reclassified.

2. The research is heavily influenced by one type of constituent, administrators.

Although faculty members and coaches were interviewed, those subjects also played an administrative role in the reclassification process by either fulfilling a dual role and/or serving in an administrative capacity on committees that influenced the organizational change. Because this is an exploratory study, it was necessary to study the experience of those people that were closest to the decision making process. In addition, a majority of those people interviewed could provide insight on the day-to-day impact the reclassification has had on the stakeholders due to their continued involvement with the university.

3. The study confines itself to schools that are located in one geographical area; therefore themes identified may not be generalizable to institutions in other locations of the country.

*Strengths of the research*

The strengths of this study include the “trustworthiness” of the findings. Qualitative research must have reliable results in order to have value. To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher employed three specific techniques: triangulation, member checking, and thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The use of multiple data sources allowed the researcher to build corroborating evidence when determining themes and eliminate much of the prejudice associated with the researcher’s past experiences with college athletics. Utilizing six data sources, informal interviews, document analysis, archival records, semi-structured interviews with gatekeepers, and direct and personal observation, data are accepted as credible. In addition, use of multiple sources addresses the research technique known as triangulation, which Stake (1995) defines as searching for the convergence of information.

Member checking was used to confirm that participants agreed with the findings, analyses, conclusions, and interpretations of each case. Key informants and professionals were used to verify the authentic portrayal of reclassification. Instrumentation such as transcripts, quotes, and the contextual model designed to capture the organizational change at each institution was shown to participants for their opinion.

Thick description permits transferability of the research because of the specificity of the case. Detailed characteristics from the case were included so that they could be applied to determine the rationale for the reclassification and the impact of the transition on the various stakeholders.

Yin (2003) also suggests looking at tests of validity to determine truthfulness. The first of which is construct validity which is establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied. Through the multiple sources of evidence, having outside reviewers, and having key informants review drafts throughout data collection, construct validity is achieved. This process also helped eliminate much of the bias discussed as a limitation. Second, Yin believes external validity is important as well. External validity is achieved by relying on analytical generalizations. Analytical generalization refers to the researcher's goal of trying to generalize results to a broader audience. Last, Yin discusses the importance of reliability, and asks whether the same case study can be conducted again, rather than the ability to "replicate the same results" (p. 37). To allow for reliability strong documentation was provided to describe the procedures followed in each case.

### Summary

The purpose of this research was to describe the process of reclassifying an athletic department to Division I and its impact on the institution and stakeholders. The study utilized case study methodology for a number of reasons. The study focused on the process of reclassification, the context in which the reclassification took place and a number of aspects (people, departments, facilities) that were altered during the organizational change. In addition, the relationship between intercollegiate athletic departments and the university, as well as personal relationships were examined.

Two universities, University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) and Elon University, were chosen for case study analysis. Data were collected and analyzed

primarily using Yin's (2003) case study methodologies. Chapter IV will describe the results from this data collection and analysis.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to describe the process of reclassifying an athletic department to Division I and its impact on the institution and stakeholders. The move to Division I is a tedious, complex, and expensive process that requires considerable resources from many constituents. The following results were collected using case study methodology, examining two institutions, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Elon University.

Preliminary data collection, primarily through observation, the researcher's own notes, articles, and university documentation, began in fall 2001 when the researcher began work at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro as a director in the athletic marketing department. Having worked in college athletics at major Division I and Division I-AAA institutions for seven years prior to UNCG, the researcher witnessed firsthand the different levels of college athletics. The researcher also coached basketball at the junior college level and had considerable interaction with coaches and administrators at the Division III and II levels. In August 2004, the researcher began work at Elon University as an adjunct instructor in the Leisure and Sport Management department.

These opportunities allowed the researcher to play the role of participant as observer at UNCG and observer-as-participant at Elon. Observation notes were taken

throughout data collection using Creswell's (1998) observation form (Appendix G). Creswell (2002) distinguishes between the two by stating that the participant as observer role occurs when "the observation role is secondary to participation role" while the observer as participant role occurs when "the role of the researcher is known" (p. 186). The experiences before and during the research shaped biases and beliefs that needed to be stated upfront and continuously checked against the tests of triangulation, member checking, the use of rich descriptions, spending prolonged time in the field, and the use of external auditors, all steps that Creswell (2002) suggests are important to achieve accuracy. Yin (2003) addresses both the threats the participant-observer role poses to objectivity, as well as the benefit of gathering information from an insider perspective. "Participant-observation provides certain unusual opportunities for collecting data, but it also involves major problems" (p. 94). For instance, not being able to take advantage of the participant-observer role would have lead to diminished "thickness" of the study. Yet Yin warns of that the participant-observer role may inhibit accurate note taking and observing if other demands are given to the researcher. Yin also writes about the emotional investment involved that may limit the researcher's ability to produce objective work.

Creswell and Yin both agree that stating biases and beliefs upfront will create an open and honest reflection and limit the emotional ties to the work. Patton (1990) suggests that it is impossible to become strictly objective because researchers are always operating from prior knowledge and any effort to distance one self would have limited

success. In order to maintain the integrity of these data, several validity checks were employed during data collection and analyses.

Data collection began with the researcher's belief that intercollegiate athletics *could* play a positive role at an institution, if managed properly. Appropriate administration, in the researcher's mind, required considerable attention and commitment from the entire campus, not just the athletics department. In addition, an ongoing assurance to the academic mission of the institution was necessary. The researcher's work in intercollegiate athletics had been a very positive experience, with the exception of a few incidents when management temporarily lacked proper oversight, did not maintain a commitment to the academic mission, or in the researcher's mind simply did not make good administrative decisions. The researcher however, had growing concern for the "arms race" and the increased financial commitment to intercollegiate athletics, particularly at the Division I level. These personal experiences and beliefs, along with additional research, helped develop the initial questions that asked: 1. Why would an institution commit to Division I?, and 2. What happened to the institution and its constituency throughout the process of reclassifying to Division I?

The work at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro was the first time the researcher had been involved with an institution that had recently upgraded the entire athletics program from Division III to Division I. After being on campus for a short period of time, the researcher immediately became interested in gaining a better understanding of the complexities involved with moving an athletic program to Division

I. With this thought in mind, informal conversations with athletic department personnel that had been at UNCG before, during, and after the transition, were initiated.

Building on these conversations, the researcher began a pilot study, with two other UNCG doctoral students, in order to gain a better understanding of the transition. The pilot study consisted of six interviews with UNCG administration, coaches, and faculty, as well as some document analysis. As stated in Chapter 3, themes that were developed out of the pilot study led to the development of the dissertation study.

The in-depth case study approach was chosen because it allowed the researcher the ability to dig deep and identify, discover, and explain each university's reclassification process. In the summer of 2003, schools that moved from a lower level division to Division I between 1985- 2005 (Appendix A) were examined and then narrowed down to five potential case studies: UNCG, Elon University, High Point University (also in North Carolina), and two South Carolina schools, Winthrop University and Wofford College.

It was determined that in order to perform in-depth case studies, no more than two cases would be analyzed for this project. Using more than two could jeopardize the ability of the research to uncover specific and important details about the reclassification. Therefore, UNCG and Elon were chosen for this dissertation project.

Data collection continued beyond the pilot study at UNCG, as more university documentation, personal records and notes from subjects, and book and articles were discovered and analyzed. Information gathered about UNCG expanded from the pilot study because the researcher examined the reclassification from a broader perspective.

Rather than examining just from an athletic department viewpoint, the researcher examined the reclassification from an institutional perspective. Therefore, documentation on the external and internal environment, the constituents and their roles, as well as the history and mission of the University were collected. Data collection continued until the fall 2006. In addition, from September 2005 until May 2006, 1 subject from the pilot study was re-interviewed and 4 additional UNCG administrators were questioned in order to gain more insight. One subject was interviewed outside the state by another experienced researcher who was informed of the purpose of the research study and guided on the conduct of the research questions. This was due to the fact that a former UNCG employee and key informant to the project was employed at a university in the western part of the United States.

Preliminary data collection began at Elon University in the fall of 2004, when the researcher was hired as an adjunct instructor. Similar to UNCG, this provided the researcher the opportunity to observe the campus culture, the administrative structure, the on-campus relationships, and the role of athletics at Elon. Although employed at Elon, the researcher was not involved in any administrative decisions. Data collection and informal interviews took place until the spring of 2005. A gatekeeper was identified and subjects were interviewed beginning in January 2006 until September 2006. Document analysis, archival data, and observation were ongoing until the winter of 2006.

Two important points throughout the research were vital to the compilation of the results. First, a commitment to triangulation has been made throughout the collection of data. Maxwell (2004) provides two valid reasons why triangulation is necessary, and

both apply to the collection in this project: “This strategy reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method and allows you to gain a broader and more secure understanding of the issues you are investigating (p. 94).

Second, the researcher continued to analyze the data while conducting the research. A continuous flow of gathering and analyzing data was very important to updating the researcher’s notes and identifying new or emerging themes. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) support this study design decision by stating, “We should never collect data without substantial analysis going on simultaneously” (p.2).

After initial observation was started at each campus, a review of pertinent articles, university documents, and archival data was begun. Research notes were taken and content analysis was performed on the archival records and institutional documents to identify prominent themes. Informal conversations were started with potential gatekeepers and interview subjects about the reclassification. Interview subjects were identified and questioned. Prior to each interview, subjects were told of the interviewee’s position at each institution and provided with confidentiality as stated in the IRB.

Once each interview was complete, audio tapes were transcribed and content analysis was performed on each transcription. Written documentation was reviewed on an ongoing basis in order to better tailor questions to each specific informant. Each informant held a different role in the reclassification process, thus the written documentation served as a means for adding appropriate questions to highlight their individual experience.

To eliminate oversight, another content analysis was performed on each interview once all of the interviews were completed at each institution. The primary researcher utilized two other researchers who are familiar with the reclassification and intercollegiate athletics research to perform a separate content analysis on each interview. Categorical indexing was used to classify common themes or central ideas that emerged from the interviews. Major themes were selected and agreed upon by research majority. The themes from each interview were given back to the subject as a form of member check. All steps in analyzing the interview transcriptions were completed to reduce known limitations when using categorical indexing (Gratton & Jones, 2004).

Once interviews were complete and all the data gathered, including observation notes, documents, articles, archival data, and interview transcriptions, data were reviewed again and themes were placed into extensive categories. Maxwell (2004) suggests this type of categorizing is placing themes under organizational labels which he defines as “broad areas” that are more “topics or bins” for sorting the data for further analysis (p. 97).

The next step in the analysis is known as theoretical categorizing (Maxwell, 2004). In this analysis, the themes are placed “in a more general or abstract framework. These categories may be derived either from prior theory or from an inductively developed theory” (p. 98). In this study, the themes are placed in the conceptual framework derived from Pettigrew’s contextualist approach (See Appendix H). The results below are themes that have been identified through careful collection and analysis,

and are presented using Pettigrew's elements on the triangle: context, process, and content.

Chapter 4 will provide the results of the study in the following manner:

1. Each school will be given an independent section.
2. The reclassification at each institution will be discussed by combining the structure of the questionnaire (before, during, and after the reclassification) with the three elements of the adapted model (context, process, and content). Therefore, all three elements will be discussed in a chronological sequence.
3. Themes are summarized at the beginning of each section for UNCG and Elon, respectively (Table 2 & 3).

First, the reader is guided through the context section in order to develop an understanding of the University atmosphere before, during, and after the transition. Under context, an historical account is provided based on specific environments that influenced the administrations' reclassification decision. Next, the process of moving to Division I is discussed. Also included in the process section are brief summaries of those constituents that most influenced the process is included. The inclusion of these constituencies was based on the following criteria: they played a consistent role during the process, their actions and reactions to the decisions greatly influenced the reclassification process. Finally, specific groups identified by the research gathered will be discussed in content. The content section will document how each institution and their stakeholders have changed over the time period studied. However, further analysis is provided on whether the change was a result of the move to Division I.

The elements are discussed in a specific sequence in order that the research is guided by the purpose statement:

The purpose of this research is to describe the process of reclassifying an athletic department to Division I and its impact on the institution and stakeholders.

### **University of North Carolina at Greensboro**

The following section about the history of the University provides the reader with detailed information about the change in context at UNCG. The University has transformed from a small, single-sex college environment to an atmosphere created by the change in the University mission to a major state research university with “high research activity” (Nonte, 2006). Studying the University through a contextualist approach requires the researcher to gather historical data in order to gain an appreciation of the organizational change process over time. Pettigrew (1987) stresses that this characteristic separates the contextualist approach from many other organizational change theories. Although the themes identified (Table 2) can easily be interchanged among the three areas of Pettigrew’s contextualist approach (process, content, and context), this section will provide vital information specific to the internal and external context in which UNCG reclassified their athletic programs.

Table 2. UNCG - Summary of Themes

<b>Context</b>	
<i>Category</i>	<i>Theme</i>
The University within the System	Since UNCG became part of the University system in 1963, it struggled to develop an identity as a co-educational, research focused, state university. In an

	effort to bring attention to UNCG's new institutional profile and to create an atmosphere similar to other North Carolina state schools, the administration decided to move the intercollegiate athletics program from Division III to Division I.
UNCG Athletics	Because of past athletic success at lower levels, particularly in men's soccer and women's basketball, Division I success would be possible.
Local environment	Civic leaders in Greensboro wanted to improve the city's image and benefit from strong athletic teams at UNCG, similar to other cities throughout North Carolina.
Higher education/State environment	Lack of athletic recognition hindered UNCG's appeal among North Carolinians.  Higher education institutions needed to market their institution's strengths in order to attract a diverse student population with growing needs.
College athletics environment	Many higher education institutions place heavy emphasis on intercollegiate athletics in hopes of gaining public recognition
<b>Process</b>	
<i>Category</i>	<i>Theme</i>
The transition to Division I	The decisions made by the UNCG administration throughout the process of moving to Division I were vital to the long term success of the University and the athletic program.  The regulations of the NCAA and UNCG's ability to gain conference affiliation affected the reclassification process.
Constituency Role in the Process	The process of moving to Division I was influenced by the interaction, reaction, and action of UNCG's faculty and students.
<b>Content</b>	
<i>Category</i>	<i>Theme</i>
The athletic product	The athletic product, athletic facilities, coaches, athletic administration, student-athletes, and the effort to win were directly impacted by the reclassification of the athletic department.
Additional changes	The change in the University facilities, faculty, student body, alumni, University profile, and

	leadership may have been indirectly impacted by the reclassification of the athletic department.
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### *Context*

The context section is broken into the following categories: the University within the System, the athletic program, the local environment, the higher education environment, and the college athletic environment. Because of the amount of information provided, each category within the context section is also divided into three time points, before, during, and after the reclassification.

#### *The University within the System*

**Theme: Since UNCG became part of the University system in 1963, it struggled to develop an identity as a co-educational, research focused, state university. In an effort to bring attention to UNCG’s new institutional profile and to create an atmosphere similar to other North Carolina state schools, the administration decided to move the intercollegiate athletics program from Division III to Division I.**

“The school was in transition and if we wanted to grow and become a doctoral granting institution, you’re going to need a strong athletic program.” (Subject Mount)

#### *Prior to the Reclassification to Division I.*

The context that UNCG was in prior to the reclassification of the athletic programs was one of confusion. This was mainly due to the changes made after 1963 when the University moved from the Women’s College to the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Not only was there a name change but more importantly, a philosophical change. The mission of the University was moving from a single sex

teaching institution to a co-educational, research university driven by improved graduate programs. When discussions first began about possibly moving the athletic program to Division I in the early 1970's and then again in 1979 and throughout the 1980's, administrators believed it could help bring attention to an institution that was going unnoticed. However, the on-campus environment, in which a move to Division I athletics would take place, was not overly enthusiastic about such an endeavor (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992; Trelease, 2004).

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) founded in 1891, was considered the premier higher education institution for women in the State of North Carolina until 1963. Its elite status resulted from accentuating traditionally female disciplines such as nursing and education, while working within a state system that did not permit women at its other campuses until completion of their sophomore year of college (Cross, 1999). During the period of 1919-1931 the institution was known as the North Carolina College for Women, and later became the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina in 1932 (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2004a).

The name change in 1932 represented a larger, state-wide change in philosophy. One year prior, a key principle, known as "allocation of function," guided the development of the institution. This principle was clearly articulated when the Consolidated University of North Carolina was formed from three institutions: the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill), the North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering (Raleigh), and the North Carolina College for Women

(Greensboro) (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2002). The effect of this principle was that each institution would form a unique set of educational responsibilities and develop programs appropriate to its own mission. For the next 31 years, the North Carolina College for Women, also known as “the WC” by many of its alumnae of the period, committed to arts and sciences programs of particular interest to women at that time (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2004a).

In 1962, the principle of “allocation of function” was fundamentally abandoned by the UNC system as a guide for institutional development. Progress in the system would be attained under the principle of “development along lines of complementary strength” (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2002). Based on this principle was the belief that undergraduate programs should support other programs, as well as complement the graduate programs. Institutional principles were based on the institution’s strongest programs rather than their past educational responsibilities (The University of North Carolina, 2006).

At the start of the 1963 academic year, philosophical development of the state system led to the abandonment of public, single sex education. Women became free to enroll at any institution where they were accepted. In addition, men were admitted to UNCG for the first time. The campus also changed its academic focus from an undergraduate liberal arts teaching academy to a doctoral granting institution with an increased emphasis on research (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2004).

By 1969, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, the University of North Carolina at Asheville, and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington joined the

University through legislative action. Two years later, the General Assembly approved legislation bringing into the University of North Carolina the state's ten remaining public senior institutions: Appalachian State University, East Carolina University, Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, North Carolina Central University, the North Carolina School of the Arts, Pembroke State University, Western Carolina University, and Winston-Salem State University (The University of North Carolina, 2006).

Universities that were each operating as “legally separate” entities, now became part of one large governing system. Decisions for programs and resources also became part of the UNC System. Although this system wide change brought significant growth in enrollment and programs to UNCG (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005b), the University struggled to regain its niche in the expanded 16-institution North Carolina State System.

The departure from the “WC” philosophy and the similarities that existed between many of the sixteen state institutions made the competition for in-state students and state funding very demanding (Trelease, 2004; University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005a). Subjects believed that the lack of aggressiveness to embrace the new mission of UNCG hurt the University in many ways. The most apparent was the way the outside community and the state legislature responded to UNCG’s financial needs:

What Greensboro did sheepishly and quietly in the 1960’s, almost embarrassingly, was to say we are no longer a women’s college. And even though in the 70’s we still had that heritage, which was a tremendous heritage which should always be embraced, we did very little to promote ourselves to the

politicians, to the state, to everyone for that matter. I think that hurt us in gaining financial assistance. (Subject Dunkirk)

There seems to be no disagreement in the fact that UNCG's new direction did not initially grab the public's interest. The University could not divorce itself of its past and therefore struggled to be seen as a major state university, capable of providing undergraduate and graduate degrees to all sexes. The UNCG Self Study Report stated bluntly that "its new role as a doctorate-granting university had not yet captured the public's attention" (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005a). Subjects echoed the belief that the new role had essentially gone unnoticed:

Everyone continued to call us the "WC"...alumni, faculty, students, and the community. We were still the nice little campus that served the female population. I remember one influential person who had been on the Board of Governors, this was the board that oversaw the entire UNC system would refer to us as "WC" and that was a decision that was made 15, 20, 25 years earlier. We could not break out of that! It was a struggle. (Subject Dunkirk)

The late 1970's and early 1980's continued to bring confusion and a lack of identity at the University. Although much had been accomplished in the 1960's and 1970's, the institution lacked a direction, and the necessary funding to make any significant improvements (Trelease, 2004). Subjects felt that a main reason for little direction was the on-campus resistance of those that did not want to embrace the change made in 1963. One subject (Mount) candidly stated, "If we (alumni, faculty, staff, and administration of UNCG) were not going to welcome the idea of "UNCG" why would anyone else?"

Another administrator provided more detail on the alumni perspective, which he believed represented a general feeling from “more than just the WC alumni, but also their friends, neighbors, coworkers, family, really everyone within the state”:

Primary among them was the context which we found our self in, in North Carolina. There was always a struggle with that matter and there was always a pullback from the graduates of WC. And many of them were the spouses of the powerful men who were graduates of Chapel Hill, State, and Duke and wanted to keep it just as it always was. (Subject Dunkirk)

Conversations about how to address the identity problem quickly focused on the role of attracting and retaining the male student to campus, as well as remaining welcoming to the strong female student body. As one subject suggested, “we moved away from some things that quite honestly were just outdated, but it was not that we didn’t want to remain loyal to the women’s population. But we just weren’t developing at all. We needed to do something.” Specific academic programs, such as math and sciences, and extracurricular activities, namely a Division I intercollegiate athletics program stood out as possible options to attract the male students and help eliminate the stigma that UNCG was mostly a women’s college (Trelease, 2004).

*During the reclassification to Division I.*

The environment of the University as it began to move the program to Division I was still one of transition. The University still lacked a strong identity, and along with athletics, much of the University needed to be improved. Although the intentions of the actual transition were declared in 1985, a renewed examination of the need to improve athletics began when a new Chancellor was hired in 1980. Within the first year, the

Chancellor began a comprehensive self-study and planning process. Although the self-study established specific goals toward continuing a strong undergraduate program and establishing a worthy graduate education, conflict between the two goals increased on-campus tensions (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2002). One subject captured the struggle by suggesting that:

We were suffering in the eyes of the Chancellor and I think he was right. We were suffering in the eyes of the legislature and those in power. Especially as schools like Charlotte and East Carolina were flexing their muscles, a medical school comes into East Carolina and Charlotte with all of its banking interest were beginning to develop serious graduate programs. Our chancellor wanted us to develop into something more than we were. The self study helped us identify areas where we needed to improve. (Subject Dunkirk)

Many faculty felt that the University need to better establish its priorities and continue to improve a strong undergraduate program or make a renewed and consistent commitment to developing the graduate programs. In addition, the legislature and the University needed to financially support the priorities at UNCG, which at that point was not being accomplished. Faculty reported receiving “mixed messages,” and “the campus as a whole [had] been getting ambiguous messages from General Administration about its role” (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2002).

The University had an opportunity to move in a serious way into advance program and it responded rather cautiously...The folks that had been involved in changing the University from WC to UNCG had an expectation and an anticipation of advanced work going on here. The place just simply had not made the transition that it had to make so the facilities and the graduate intensity of the University were major issues. Important to both of these issues was that we had terrible budget support. That was the state operated budget was just not good. How can you have all these great things if you are not receiving the necessary support? (Subject Mount)

Overall the period between 1980 and 1995 was described as one of transition from a regional liberal arts institution to a national, and even international, graduate research university. Although the change was not always embraced by all, the University began steps to match the identity created in 1963. A part of the transition was the extraordinarily opinionated intercollegiate athletic department move from Division III to Division I:

It was an organizational change that gained the most attention, but it really was one of many changes that needed to be made. Bluntly, we were not in good shape. The facilities were in terrible shape, the academic buildings were inadequate. The residents' halls were in the same shape - terrible. There were no recreational opportunities. Athletics was in the background. But I knew it was a serious issue, but it just didn't match up with those. (Subject Mount)

The overall philosophy of change during the former Chancellor's time in office was one of quality, enhancing what the University had, not what it did not have. One subject described the administration's thinking:

And again the thinking was we have 10,000 students, it is a state university, and in fact it is in the third largest city in the state of North Carolina. So why don't we glom onto these attributes. And really move the issue forward. That's where people with the power decided we need to move it forward. (Subject Hartwick)

Another faculty/administrator stated:

The Chancellor wished to have the institution that he was president at be the most viable – viable and popular institution – so he could in fact perpetuate his graduate school and in fact, bring more and more gifted people into his program. His undergraduate program was nothing too necessarily to write home about. So he wished to equate all of these changes, including moving to Division I, to his undergraduate and graduate program would be perceived as top shelf. That would

lead to UNCG building a pool of people that would make this terrific. (Subject Syracuse)

All decisions, from residential life to athletics to academics need to be made with an emphasis on “giving each student an enhanced and rewarding collegiate experience” (Subject Albany). The transition during this time was methodical, but continuous. The most influential changes had come with a steady increase in students, which meant an increase in administration, faculty, and staff, more research, and finally, many physical changes during this time (University of North Carolina, 2005a). Between 1980 and 1995, student enrollment increased from 10,390 to 12,644. Interestingly enough, this also included a three year decline in enrollment (1981-1983) where enrollment reached a low of 9,925 (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2000). More fulltime employees were added as well, to an all-time high of 1562 in 2005. The University continued to increase its research output and granted 52 doctoral degrees in 1980 compared to 72 in 1995 (University of North Carolina, 2005a).

In addition, improvements to old buildings were completed and new facilities were completed in order to improve the physical campus. As one subject put to describe what happened in those times, “At the end, we said – look we have a campus. Just look around we have a campus” (Subject Brunswick).

*Division I status: Division I status: after the reclassification.*

The transition to Division I became official in 1991. This era began with campus unrest between administration and faculty as many of the changes that had taken place, including athletics, began to divide faculty and administration. Some vocal faculty

suggested that the decision making by the administration had been completed without much input. And in fact, even when input had been given, it had been ignored (Trelease, 2004). One subject described it as:

Just a cultural shock for those that had been through all of those changes. When you looked around there was so many aspects of campus that were different – maybe it was too much. I think, at that time, there were people that looked around and loved the changes, and there were those that looked around and said, ‘what happened’? (Subject Syracuse)

The changes that occurred can be summarized in the University’s 1994 Mission Statement: “Recognizing that the society it serves is global, the University applies its intellectual resources to enhance the quality of life in the Piedmont Triad region, the state of North Carolina, the nation, and the world” (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2002). This was certainly an immense difference from the days of the WC and it represented more of what the University could be, not what it currently was. Essentially, although the culture had begun to change, not everything was complete at UNCG.

In 1995 the first female Chancellor was hired at UNCG and noticed immediately, the identity crisis. “When I first came I found an institution that wasn't sure who it was or what it wanted to be and uncertain about its future” (Withers, 2005, p.A1). Over the last decade, UNCG has made a strong commitment to graduate research and external funding, but in the Chancellor words, “the core of the academic program for undergraduates is still solid for the liberal arts”. As one subject stated, “we may have

gone through our growing pains to finally find out that we do not need to forget the past in order to succeed in the future” (Subject Albany).

A closer look at recent history reveals that under the current Chancellor’s leadership, UNCG has made a strong effort to continue what was started under the previous leadership, in particular a renewed commitment to graduate programs and research.

The academic environment has changed as UNCG has become a top-tiered research institution within the state system. However, the University is quick to point out that while they have emphasized research and graduate programs, they also maintain a commitment to undergraduate teaching and being “student-centered”, where students are first. (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005b). One subject (Brunswick) provided a subtle reminder that the school “is still focused on service.” And emphatically stated, “that has not changed!”

Academically, UNCG is considered moderately difficult to gain entrance. 60 percent of applicants were admitted in fall 2005. Freshman entering in 2005 carried an average GPA of 3.48. In addition, over 61 percent of the freshman scored over 500 on the verbal portion of the SATs and 65 percent scored over 500 on the math section (Peterson’s Guide, 2006).

UNCG has also enhanced the academic environment by identifying programs in which students have a strong need. New doctoral degree programs in information systems (IS), economics, geography, history and special education have been established in 2003 and 2004, along with a fulltime MBA program in 2004 (Gilliam, 2003). In the

fall of 2005, the UNCG School of Nursing began offering a Ph.D. degree in nursing in an effort to answer the “increasing national demand for highly trained and doctoral-prepared nurses”. In addition, the Gerontology Program and the School of Business collaborated to form an MS in Gerontology/MBA, the first of its kind in North Carolina. Finally, the University added a doctor of public health degree in the fall of 2006 (Olsen, 2005).

The commitment to strong academic programs and student life led to several national awards for UNCG. In July 2004, UNCG was one of the 50 top values among public colleges and universities in the United States, according to Consumers Digest magazine (Gilliam, 2004a). In addition, the Princeton Review ranked UNCG the second "best bargain" among public colleges and universities in 2004, and has been ranked in their survey for the last seven years (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2004c). In 2006, UNCG was one of the 100 best values among public, four-year colleges and universities in the United States, according to Kiplinger’s Personal Finance (Nonte, 2006a).

In recent years UNCG also received their share of academic accolades. In 2004 and 2005 UNCG received top awards for their distance learning programs, which are designed to provide “educational opportunities to individuals who would not have had access to traditional face-to-face classes” (Nonte, 2005). The Department of Counseling and Educational Development graduate program was second in the nation in the 2007 U.S. News & World Report rankings (Hines, 2006). The School of Education is annually in the U.S. News & World Report top 50 (Nonte, 2003).

In April 2006, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has classified The University of North Carolina at Greensboro a research university with “high research activity.” The reclassification earns UNCG a status which it has longed for, and more importantly could lead to potential funding from the UNC Board of Governors (Nonte, 2006b).

Currently, six professional schools (see Appendix I for the complete listing) in addition to the College of Arts and Sciences and the International Honors College comprise the academic divisions of UNCG. The University currently offers bachelor’s degrees with over 100 possible majors, 63 master’s programs, and 27 doctoral programs (The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005b).

In the fall of 2005, the student body maintained a strong ratio of female students, as 68% of undergraduates were female. UNCG continues to enroll a large percentage of in-state students, as only 8% of undergraduate and 15% of graduate students were from out-of-state. 25% of the student body is classified as a minority race/ethnicity, with 20% of undergraduate and 12% of graduate students being African-American (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005b).

The context of the University is still one of transition; however, the direction appears to be much clearer. There seems to be little confusion on and off campus that the University is a major state university, committed to improving the graduate and undergraduate programs, increasing research, and creating a healthy student environment, including Division I intercollegiate athletics.

The last decade at UNCG has still had its share of changes; however, many describe the changes occurring in an environment which is more welcoming and understanding. One subject believes that this is due to:

...the current Chancellor and her administration attempting to keep an open line of communication. I think people, including faculty, just feel more involved in the changes. We may not all agree but at least we are involved, or we think we are. (Subject Syracuse)

Another subject stated that the University is still operating in a unique culture.

We are still moving forward with our research and graduate programs and all of that, but in small ways, we are creating an environment that is welcoming back what we used to be. (Subject Brunswick)

Another interviewee echoed that by stating:

If you look around we are still very heavy female students. They are still a very important part of who we are. I joke that someday we are going to go back to being the WC. (Subject Saratoga)

A symbolic gesture of the renewed commitment was seen in 2004, the University redesigned its logo, Minerva, and reestablished it as the official University logo, separate from the Spartan, the athletic department logo. Minerva represents, “both our rich past and promising future, the symbol of Minerva encapsulates all that the University has been and all that it aspires to be.” More importantly, Minerva represents a dedication to the history of the WC, as she was long used as a symbol during those days. When the school changed to UNCG in 1963, some thought the Minerva symbol was too feminine and it

eventually changed to the Spartans in 1967 (Shelmerdine, 2003). Finally, one subject warned that the University's culture of combining the past with the present can compromise success in the future:

At some point we have to stop apologizing for who we are. We have to put our energies into the future. Don't get me wrong, our history is unique and is important. But I still feel like we are spending more time apologizing and explaining than anything else. You know at some point we have to say to those people that want the small class sizes and the WC back – 'that is not who we are...*this* is who we are' (Subject Hartwick).

#### *UNCG Athletics*

**Theme: Because of past athletic success at lower levels, particularly in men's soccer and women's basketball, Division I success would be possible.**

##### *Prior to the Reclassification to Division I.*

Athletic success was not unprecedented at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro prior to their move to Division I. The athletic department was, for the most part, poorly supported by the University, yet experienced moments of success.

Administrators thought that if the teams could experience victory without much University support at the Division III level, then a closer examination should be conducted to see if athletics could thrive, perhaps at a higher level.

UNCG women's athletics had a history of success in a number of programs (Jones, 1981). In the 1940's and 50's, the Women's College helped grow the game of women's golf through competitive alumnae (Nancy Porter) and as a host to golf championships (hosted the 10th national golf tournament in 1954 at the Starmount Country Club in Greensboro). In the 1960's, WC fielded tennis, golf and field hockey

teams that were among the best in the state and the region (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2000). In 1963 UNCG began women's basketball, which would become a consistently successful program.

In 1967 men's athletics were added and the intercollegiate program for men and women received formal recognition from the University (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005c). The 1960's came to a close with the men's team joining the Dixie Conference in 1968, which was a Conference made up mostly of other regional colleges. The men's program quickly developed rivals with such schools as Greensboro College, Methodist, North Carolina Wesleyan, and Christopher Newport. In 1967, the University became known as the Spartans, and added blue to their athletic uniforms, both in an attempt to become more masculine and have a symbol that represented courage (University of North Carolina at Greensboro 2000a; Shelmerdine, 2003).

The women's teams began the 1970's with much success, while the men's programs struggled to gain any consistent victories. In 1971, the women's basketball team finished fourth in the National Collegiate Tournament. The next season, they won 17 games and captured the North Carolina Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (NCAIAW) title in the program's initial season of AIAW affiliation. In addition, the women's golf program won the University's first National Championship in 1973 (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2000; 2005c).

During the same time, the men's programs had very little athletic success, particularly in its high profile sports, basketball and soccer. Although both programs were young (basketball began in 1968 and soccer in 1971) expectations to be competitive

were present; meeting those expectations however did not become a reality (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2000a).

Between 1970 and 1978, the men's basketball team had a 35% winning percentage and achieved their best season in 1976, winning only 11 out of 26 games. Despite a good season in 1974, the men's soccer program struggled in NAIA competition (1971-1977), winning 25 games, while losing 54 and tying eight times. However, in 1978, athletic success for the men's teams started to happen. Joe Caldeiria, a men's golf player, became an NCAA Division III All-American in 1978-1979, and again in 1979-1980. In 1978-1979, the men's basketball team finished above a .500 winning percentage for the first time in their 11 year history (16 wins, 12 losses) and advanced to the NCAA Division III Regional Tournament. In the fall of 1979, the men's soccer program also won more games than lost, (9 wins, 5 losses, 5 ties) and finished in fourth place in the Dixie Conference (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005c).

Subjects described the pre-Division I days in the following manner:

The athletics department was not important. In fact, some people will tell you that the athletics program, for the most part was discouraged to a certain level. But what's interesting is not only were the male athletes discouraged, the female athletes were also discouraged. Prior to 1963, many female athletes, good athletes, were essentially told to go elsewhere if they wanted to succeed. (Subject Brunswick)

The faculty and really the rest of campus, I think was happy and content with this quiet athletic program that virtually no one knew existed. (Subject Dunkirk)

*During the reclassification to Division I.*

UNCG athletics began the reclassification process in 1986; however, an increase in funding to become a stronger Division III program began in 1980, under the new Chancellor. This changed the perspective of intercollegiate athletics at UNCG, as more attention and resources were given from this point until the present (Trelease, 2004).

As the 1980's began, the women's athletic programs made drastic improvements from a poor showing in the late 1970's. The women's basketball program endured tough times from 1975-79, winning 13 games under three head coaches, including a 0-19, 1978-79 season. In 1981-82, UNCG hired a new full time head coach and administrator. The women's basketball team finished second in the NCAA tournament championships in 1981-1982 season and was 85-7 against Dixie League competition from 1981-1988 (Bozarth, 2003). Finally, the team was "one of only 10 nationally in any division to qualify for the NCAA Tournament the first seven years it was held" (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2000). Women's athletic accomplishments were not only achieved by the basketball team, as the women's tennis team won seven straight Dixie Conference titles and finished second in the NCAA Division III tournament. Volleyball had also experienced high levels of success in the early to mid 1980's, winning conference championships and sustaining national rankings (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005c).

In addition, the UNCG men's soccer program established itself as one of the most dominant Division III soccer programs in the country. UNCG won Division III national championships in 1982, 1983, 1985, 1986 and 1987. In 1981, the UNCG men's soccer team received its first top 20 ranking and did not leave the national polls until 1991, the

school's first year in Division I (Keys, 2003). In seven years of men's and women's Dixie Conference competition (1981-88), UNCG teams won 23 regular-season and 23 tournament titles. Just as impressive, student-athletes earned nearly 250 All-Conference awards (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005c).

Once UNCG athletics left the comfort of Division III in 1988, athletic success became harder, but not impossible. The athletic department experienced success in men's and women's soccer, women's basketball, and women's volleyball. Athletic victories during this period were perhaps one of the greatest achievements at UNCG because each team competed as an independent program, meaning that UNCG did not have a conference affiliation.

Without conference affiliation, recruiting became difficult in many sports, particularly men's basketball. UNCG men's basketball immediately fell from the Division III success it had established in the mid 1980's. As an independent, the men's basketball program won only 33% of their games, highlighted by the 1988-1989 season when they finished with 14 wins and 13 losses. (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005c).

*Division I status: after the reclassification.*

UNCG began play in Division I in 1991 and continued its independent status during the 1991-1992 season. In the fall of 1992, UNCG joined the Big South Conference and competed there until 1996-1997. In the fall of 1997 the UNCG athletic department became a full member in the Southern Conference, where it remains today. The following provides a brief history of UNCG at the Division I level.

The environment has changed several times since the move to Division I, beginning with an unmatched excitement, when UNCG was thrilled with their move to Division I. The next phase was a period of great success in the Big South Conference, where the athletic teams dominated their competition. The context of the final stage, roughly beginning around the time of the move to the Southern Conference to present, is one of frustration. With the exception of soccer, UNCG has experienced moderate on the field success since 1998. Enthusiasm for the athletic program seems to have stabilized and questions have begun to arise regarding the relationship between the University, the athletics department and the community.

UNCG athletics experienced a “euphoric state” (Subject Altamont) once Division I status had been attained. Initially, the athletic program experienced success right away and had that feel of, as one subject stated,

Being Division I...We thought we had arrived. We had hit all the hoops. But as a program we thought we had clearly hit the big time. We won! We won! Because we moved to DI and that is the top level of competition in the NCAA. And we wanted to associate ourselves with those programs. (Subject Altamont)

In addition to the established teams, UNCG made several additions to the athletic program: women’s golf, which was reinstated in 1990, baseball and men’s cross country were added in 1991, women’s cross country and softball were added in 1992, and wrestling became a Division I sport in 1993 (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005c).

On the playing fields, UNCG opened the Division I era in the brand new UNCG Soccer Stadium, a \$3.6 million facility opened for its first game on September 7, 1991, as

the men's team defeated Campbell, 3-1. Four days later, the Spartans stunned then number 2 national ranked North Carolina State, 2-1 (Keys, 2003a). Later that same year, UNCG men's soccer defeated The Ohio State University in front of 4,225 spectators, the largest crowd ever to see at UNCG athletic event on campus (Keys, 2003a).

This start was a good sign of the future as men's soccer continued to be among the nation's best. Since the move to Division I, the Spartans men's soccer program qualified for the NCAA Tournament eight times, including a second round appearance in 1998 and two rounds of 16 appearances in 2004 and 2005. From 1993-1996 UNCG men's soccer finished first in the Big South Conference, losing only 3 conference games in that time span. When UNCG moved to the Southern Conference, they finished first in 1997 and 1998. In 2004 and 2005 UNCG captured Southern Conference titles and again found themselves among the nation's best, including their first ever Division I number one ranking for four weeks in 2004 (Keys, 2003a, University of North Carolina, 2005c).

Other high profile men's programs have also experienced success, but not with the same consistency as men's soccer. In 1994, the baseball program, in just its fourth season, won the Big South championship and advanced to the NCAA Regionals. The baseball team would win the Big South Conference again in 1997 and win one game in the NCAA tournament (D'Abrams, 2006). Men's basketball finished first in the Big South in 1994-1995 and 1995-1996 and the Southern Conference in 2001-2002 seasons, going to the NCAA Tournament in 1996 and 2002 (Hirschman, 2005).

On the women's side, basketball, softball, and soccer had sustained excellence. Women's basketball claimed five straight Big South regular season titles from 1993 to

1997 as well as the Southern Conference Tournament title and earned its first-ever NCAA Division I Tournament bid in 1998 (Kimmel, 2005a).

Softball captured three consecutive Big South regular season titles from 1995-1997 and four straight Tournament championships between 1994 and 1997. Women's Soccer began conference play in 1993 and did not lose a regular season conference game until 1999 (22-0 in the Big South, 15-0 in the Southern Conference). UNCG either won the Southern Conference Regular Season or Tournament Championship in 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2003 and 2004. The women's soccer team played in the NCAA Tournament in 1996, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, and 2003 (Kimmel, 2005b, University of North Carolina, 2005c).

In taking a closer look at the higher profile Division I sports (soccers, basketballs, baseball and softball), UNCG experienced great success in the Big South Conference and had essentially dominated, or at the very least was competitive, in every sport played. Once the move to the Southern Conference was made victories were not as easy.

From 1999-2003, UNCG men's soccer failed to win any conference championships and failed to make the NCAA Tournament. Women's soccer had their first and only below .500 year (7-12-2) in 2002 and for the first time since being eligible for an automatic birth in the NCAA Tournament has had back-to-back years (2004, 2005) when it did not make postseason play. Since the move, baseball has not won a Southern Conference regular season title and men's basketball has captured only one Southern Conference title. Women's basketball has not won a conference title since 1998 and

softball since 1997. Finally, volleyball has not had a winning record since 1998 (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005c).

Certainly this can be an indication the competition getting better, but some subjects offered a different perspective. Some subjects raised the interesting point that the relationship between the University and the athletic program is suffering, and as a result, losses have followed:

This is a chicken-shit university. As a matter of fact it still wants to be just the opposite of what it is. In terms of the mechanics and the clothing what you look like, you can pretty much be Division I. So what? Well we are there! What do you want to be now? Now that we are Division I. That's the basics of it there. Everything done in that athletic department has the Division I connotation to it. And we are complying with whatever the interpretation of Division I is. If your interpretation of Division I – outsiders, experts – is you ought to be like THIS..well then we are not Division I.. Things that have to change is that the group mentality of the university has to pick-up to Division I. I am afraid this institution is NOT Division I, nor has it ever been. We are still a Division III university (Subject Hartwick)

I think the fallacy of Division I is that there are so many levels of DI and we are kinda stuck at the same level we were 10 years ago...I mean is this it – is this Division I? Look around, do we have Division I facilities? Do we get Division I support? And then we are asked to go win against other schools who offer more, who do more? I mean don't get me wrong, it can be worse, but you know what, it can be better too. (Subject Altamont)

Time and repetition. And continuing to beat the message home to make everybody understand that we are Division I. But it is not just one argument and walk away from it. Because your institution needs to have to be Division I too. We have a lot of history to overcome. For me, our uniqueness is our history, so we have to change our history to do the same thing for Division I. You have to identify what it is that you want to be to make it Division I...Be proud of who you are! The problem is there are people here who don't want to be Division I. They never have. There is an outlaw at this university that wants it to go back to being 6,000 students. And some comfortable notion of what that means for class size, pay, academic commitments and all of that. That is long since gone! That was

not even here in 1987 when I got here. We have long been past that battle. There is a group of people here that associate Division I with sleaziness. Well that is backward thinking. I have been here for 15 years telling you that we ain't sleazy by definition - folks I am sorry you are wrong. I have been as righteous and as clear with my mission as anyone around here. My point is in this whole thing is that YOU WILL KNOW when you hit Division I. When you look around and you go out into the world and get people to buy into your program with cash and other things to be identified with your program. You will know when you are Division I. Son, that thing is going to tip over so fast it will go the other way. You won't even have to sell what is Division I. You won't even have to sell! And the people who are raising money won't have to sell what is Division I because the people will be trying to get to you. You won't be trying to get to them. Basketball games – people will be lined up out front trying to get into the games, you won't have to be trying to sell them. The excitement of the program and the general excitement of the programs will be there. The institution will lovingly accept what you got for them because you will be doing what the Chancellor wanted you to do. Bring in people to your institution who otherwise would not have come here because of your persona. (Subject Herkimer)

During the last decade, the Division I athletics program has not generated an overly enthusiastic environment. Attendance and community support has leveled and questions concerning the future have become more prominent. One subject (Hartwick) suggests that

The program is once again at another crossroads. We are going to have to decide if we are satisfied with whom we are. Or do we want to be better? If we want to be better it is going to take everyone at the University.

The teams have not been as captivating as many at UNCG had anticipated. Much of the indifference toward athletics maybe due to the lack of consistent winning in high profile sports such as men's and women's basketball, and baseball. Although both men's and women's soccer has experienced success, it appears to have gone unnoticed both on and off campus.

*Local environment*

**Theme: Civic leaders in Greensboro wanted to improve the city's image and benefit from strong athletic teams at UNCG, similar to other cities throughout North Carolina.**

Civic leaders in Greensboro had come to the then Chancellor in the mid 1970's to ask him to consider moving the UNCG men's basketball team to Division I. As part of the incentive, monies were offered by the community to help support some of the costs associated with a move. The feeling was that a strong basketball program could help the city's image. The chancellor at the time rejected the idea after little campus support. When the new chancellor took office in 1980, civic leaders once again approached the University to reconsider the earlier decision, in particular since Charlotte had just experienced national attention for getting the men's basketball team to the Final Four (Trelease, 2004).

What I kept hearing about was UNC-Charlotte. They had gotten to the Final Four in the late 70's in men's basketball. And there was still this rivalry between Charlotte and Greensboro. Obviously, Charlotte was the one that was going to make a big go of it – not the universities, the city. Charlotte was going to be the one that was going to grow. But this was a part of that thing. I think that was what was motivating some of the business leaders in the earlier 70's to see us go to Division I. They did it in Charlotte, we can do it. Look what they got. Look all of the visibility the city and the University received. (Subject Syracuse)

The leaders of the community had come forward once before, in the 1970's when the Chancellor was here and offered funding to back a more substantial program. When the chancellor took the idea to the campus, it was rejected, mainly by the faculty. This created some hard feelings, nothing personal, but hard feelings mainly from the folks who put forward the funding and felt so strongly about the idea, toward the campus. (Subject Mount)

The community, the business community, wanted UNC-Greensboro to be a much more serious player on the stage in North Carolina...Not just in an athletics sort of way, but that was leading the cause. More programs in the sciences, coupled with this desire to move this university ahead in its visibility and it was determined that division one athletics would be a way of doing that and would also help us some with male enrollment. (Subject Dunkirk)

*Prior to the Reclassification to Division I.*

The city of Greensboro and the Piedmont Triad area (Greensboro, High Point, and Winston-Salem) had created a strong economic climate because of the success of furniture, tobacco and textile companies, all blue-collar industries. Based on the success of these industries Greensboro had become a moderately successful city in a booming state (Jarboe, 2006). However, it was losing ground to other cities in North Carolina, namely Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, Winston-Salem, and Charlotte; all cities that developed strong ties with the local universities.

The town and gown relationship between the city of Greensboro and UNCG was virtually nonexistent in the 1960's and most of the 1970's. Most of the local and regional community still viewed UNCG as the Women's College and placed their allegiance to the other universities in the North Carolina (Trelease, 2004). Subjects provided rationale for this loyalty as either; 1. most of the community, including the influential leaders of Greensboro, did not attend UNCG; or 2. that same group had become loyal to one of the "Big Four" schools (University of North Carolina, North Carolina State, Duke University, and Wake Forest University) in the Atlantic Coast Conference. In addition, the local alumnae of the WC had either become committed to their husband's alma mater

and their money and time would go to his university or the local alumni from UNCG were not cultivated and felt very little connection to the University once they left.

Trelease (2004) writes that the first serious town and gown controversy was when UNCG began to expand campus in the 1960's by attempting to redevelop neighborhood houses into University property. Minor issues relating to drug use and gang violence became a problem in the 1970's for both campus and city, but this was not uncommon between other universities and cities.

Throughout the 1970's business leaders of the time, namely a group that later became known as the "Big Five" because of their financial backing of the athletic program's transition to Division I, saw what they believed could be a great economic opportunity for the city and the University. The University administrators saw this as an opening to build the town and gown relationship with prominent civic leaders that had not existed.

From a national perspective, Greensboro also had become a city recognized for unflattering social incidences. The social tensions of the 1960's and 1970's were symbolized in two major events. The first event occurred on February 1, 1960, when four North Carolina A&T students went into the Downtown Woolworth's and sat at the all-white counter. This act known as the Greensboro Sit-in, started similar non-violent protests against other segregated business across the South (Suggs, 2001). The Greensboro Sit-ins had a positive impact on the social movement, as private business would later change their policies; however it also brought a tremendous amount of

attention to the segregated system that was still ingrained in Greensboro and throughout the South (Greensboro Daily News, 1960; Schlosser, 2006).

On campus, WC students that participated in the Sit-ins were “dressed down by then Chancellor, Gordon Blackwell, and told they were “setting back the course of race relations in Greensboro”. Students were persuaded not to return to the city and get involved in these types of social issues (Trelease, 2004, p. 270). Town and gown relations suffered over the next several years, as student protests turned their attention to other Greensboro business that remained segregated (Trelease, 2004).

In 1979, a much more horrific event known as the Greensboro Massacre, symbolized the segregation, violence and hatred that still existed in the area. The incident, which occurred in the middle of the day, was captured by the local news and later shown nationally, created an unflattering national image of the people of Greensboro. Members of the Ku Klux Klan and American Nazi Party attacked a demonstration by a communist labor party who were trying to unionize black workers. Five of the marchers were killed, and 10 were wounded. “In the annals of this nation's long-running racial strife, Greensboro has a spot on the list of places -- such as Money and Philadelphia, Miss.; Selma, Ala.; and Brevard County, Fla. -- where some of the most brutal assaults on civil-rights activists occurred” (Wickham, 2004, p. 11A).

These events and the strong feelings associated with the parties involved in each had an impact on the local environment and the campus life in the 1960's, 1970's and beyond. Some people believe that due to the nature of the violence associated with the

Greensboro Massacre that the “city’s wounds still have not healed”, and the “city’s past could turn away the businesses it is trying to recruit” (Fears, 2005, p. A3).

Business leaders suggested that Greensboro needed UNCG to give the city a boost, both socially and economically. More specifically, business leaders hoped for regional and national recognition beyond the two negative incidents that helped shape Greensboro’s image. The city leaders were optimistic that UNCG could follow the similar success of UNC Charlotte’s basketball team, which helped represent a flourishing city, in particular the struggling downtown area (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992; Schlosser, 2006).

*During the reclassification to Division I.*

Things were pretty good in the ‘80’s in that sense because the mills, the textile mills were doing well, the furniture was doing well. What needed to be positioned was “Where was Greensboro? Where was UNCG?” I can tell you that one definitive answer why UNCG was because we carry the name Greensboro. So wherever we would go, wherever we were successful, it would make a statement about all of Greensboro. “Well, that’s where Guilford Mills is, Oh, that’s where Burlington is, Oh that’s where Cone is, Oh that’s the furniture capital. (Subject Brunswick)

The local environment during the reclassification was extremely enthusiastic. The “Big Five” started a fund-raising campaign by not only committing financial support from themselves, but also getting other community and business leaders to support the move to Division I. Initially, the financial donations were enough to make the dream of Division I a reality (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992). Subjects spoke very highly of the local community and their enthusiasm during the transition:

The local community really kept this thing moving. We had some people that really, really worked hard. You know they would hold these meetings with other Greensboro business leaders and they would ask them for their support. They pounded the pavement and worked to get this thing off the ground. They deserve a lot of credit...Those guys really tried. They were sending the message that was long overdue. UNCG needed Greensboro and Greensboro needed UNCG.  
(Subject Mount)

Many of the local leaders that were approached in the 1980's are still helping the University today. The groundwork started with the Division I in '91 campaign.  
(Subject Brunswick)

However, as the move to Division I became official the same businesses during the early 1980's that could afford to support the move began to suffer financially. The region's big problem was and still is that those industries have been declining rapidly as employers move their operations to foreign labor markets (Schlosser, 2006). As the nation's economic times worsened in the 1980-1990's, so did Greensboro's, and thus so did the continuing support of UNCG's athletic department (Jacobson, 2003).

*Division I status: after the reclassification.*

The combination of a poor local and national economy, declining health of UNCG's most ardent and loyal supporters, and a loss of enthusiasm for UNCG athletics placed a limit on financial contributions from the local leaders. The environment throughout the late 1980's and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century was at best described as survival, as business after business closed its doors. The stronghold industries (furniture, textiles, and tobacco) continued their decline as the Triad's manufacturing jobs dropped from 125,300 in 1996 to 94,000 in 2006 (Jarboe, 2006, p. 16). In Guilford County the average annual unemployment rate rose each year between 1999 and 2002, reaching a high of 6.7%

unemployment in January of 2002 (North Carolina Employment Security Commission, 2006).

The Big Five, who were very supportive of the growth of Division I athletics, had reached a point where, as one subject put it, “the well had run dry for us. You know you can’t keep going back to the same people with your hand out” (Subject Herkimer). The reality was that UNCG could not find consistent support from new community leaders. "The jobs being lost aren't coming back," said Don Kirkman, president and CEO of the Piedmont Triad Partnership, an economic-development group. "It's not like a downturn where people will be re-employed after the economy rebounds. We're literally faced with having to re-create the regional economy." (Jacobson, 2003, p.2715).

And I was disappointed that other people didn’t appreciate what our athletic programs meant, not so much to the university, but what it meant to the community to enjoy intercollegiate sports, at a level that you just can’t when it comes to the ACC or any of the big schools. You just can’t get that close to the action and that kind of access all. But in their minds – this was not Division I, and so there was no widespread support. (Subject Herkimer)

The lack of community support after their initial stage in Division I was described by a 1997 Greensboro News & Record article, stating that seats were “embarrassingly empty” (McMurtrie, 1997b, p. B1). The small local fan base is still an issue that impacts the athletic department and it could limit the future progress of the Spartans:

We’re clueless as to where that money will come from because our old wells, the Big Five, they’re no longer with us. Their money is dried up or they’re dead, or the textile industry is no longer here. So what got us up there isn’t able to continue to sustain us. Whereas the viable Division I institutions around us have years and years and years and years of history. (Subject Brunswick)

The lack of athletic support does not represent the entire picture for the University. Since 1995, the chancellor has made it a priority to continue what her predecessor started and continue to get the city of Greensboro involved in the campus growth (Trelease, 2004). As the new millennium began, civic leaders began to see economic opportunity in other industries, with one being higher education, particularly UNCG.

A 2006 economic impact study, completed by Dr. Andrew Brod, director of the Office of Business and Economic Research in the Bryan School of Business and Economics at UNCG, and Richard Howarth, a graduate student in the school, stated that “the University generates economic activity totaling \$588 million for the eight-county Piedmont Triad region, and \$541 million in Guilford County.” Analyzing the data further shows that UNCG does business with more than 11,000 companies and spent \$103.8 million and provided salaries totaling \$99.9 million to 2249 employees, 91% of which live in the Guilford County (Gilliam, 2004b).

Civic leaders have realized this value and have contributed back to the University in a number of ways, most notably in financial support. The most recent example is the Students First Campaign, a \$78.2 million capital campaign made public by UNCG officials in October 2004, being co-chaired by an alumna and two business leaders. Current leadership gifts have also been made by a combination of alumni, civic leaders, and local and regional corporations (Gilliam, 2004c). The large dollar goal and the combination of current gifts suggest that the local community has warmed up to the University.

However the development of many of these relationships and the direct economic benefit has not yet carried over to the athletic department; some subjects suggest that may come when UNCG can be a consistent winner, particularly in basketball where media attention can be significant.

When you start winning, then you are a benefit to the city of Greensboro. And I think that has been where we lack. Our *University* is a great benefit to the city of Greensboro, but I don't think the city of Greensboro necessarily needs the athletic teams, most don't even need the University, at least they don't think they do. I mean half the town doesn't even know we are here and we are right in the *middle* of the city. They drive by us everyday, drive by our stadiums, right by. I am just not sure they are buying into UNCG, and one of those reasons are the other attractions. Well, I am sorry I already give there and I have season tickets there, and so that's why I say I don't know how much further athletics can go. (Subject Altamont)

Another potential benefit to UNCG and possibly the athletics program is the apparent rebirth of the Greensboro economy, based largely on new or revitalized industries. Schlosser (2006) suggests that a rebirth of new industries (cargo transportation, health care, biotechnology, and higher education) has occurred over the last 4 years, as has a commitment to reviving the Greensboro downtown area.

It certainly appears that after years of cultivation, the local environment is more welcoming to UNCG than ever before. In addition, the new contributors that are desperately needed to help advance the University may be interested in supporting some of the academic and athletic developments at UNCG. Yet, it may not be enough to lift the athletic program to develop into what the University of North Carolina at Charlotte has become.

*Higher education/State environment*

**Theme: Lack of athletic recognition hindered UNCG's appeal among North Carolinians.**

The following section briefly examines the national trends in the higher education environment before, during, and after the reclassification. Next, impact of the national trends will be discussed within the context of the state of North Carolina and more specifically UNCG.

The context we were in was so important that no one could understand that your resources were determined by how people viewed you and how seriously they took you. Think about it – it was that context of 16 schools fighting for resources. You want to be taken seriously and you have to understand that the legislature plays a role...there are people there who play a major role who don't always simply look at the academic profile of the school. And that is just life. (Subject Dunkirk)

**Theme: Higher education institutions needed to market their institution's strengths in order to attract a diverse student population with growing needs.**

As UNCG was considering a change in their athletic program, a shift in the higher education environment was also taking place. Cohen (1998) writes that beginning in the mid 1970's, higher education welcomed a large number of students, from diverse backgrounds, dealing with numerous social and political issues to their undergraduate programs. College enrollments continued to grow as access broadened to include older students, more part-time students, more female students, and students were taking longer to complete degree programs. In addition, colleges became more competitive in

attracting the best and brightest students locally, regionally, nationally, and eventually internationally.

This growth forced more administrators to spend more time on bureaucratic details in order to acquire outside funding and less time on addressing student needs, a continuing trend started from the post World War II admissions boom (Cremin, 1988, p561). Campus development became a way of life for administrators, in particular state institutions that were part of a university system, similar to that of North Carolina, California, and New York (Trelease, 2004).

In addition to spending much time on administrative planning, state university systems began the process of centralizing leadership into one consolidation, particularly addressing curriculum overlap, as the economy worsened into the 1970's (Freeland, 1992). Both the centralized leadership and poor economy forced schools within the state system to battle amongst each other for state resources (Cohen, 1998). The new fight became more difficult as traditional public universities were receiving less support from the state. In fact, Trelease (2004) states that from the 80's onward the new designation of traditionally public institutions was "public assisted" rather than "public supported" (p.417).

As the 1980's began, American higher education institutions were in the midst of cutting budgets. However, by the mid 1980's, the economy began to rebound and much of the focus on campus moved to graduate education. The graduate mission began overpowering campuses and the undergraduate curriculum, and thus moved some of the much needed support toward research, away from the traditional undergraduate

programs. However, if universities wanted to be among the best, the administrative line of thinking was to strengthen graduate education. Perhaps Cohen (1998) sums up the environment of the time by suggesting:

Master's and doctoral degrees were requisite for entry to an increasing number of occupations. The institutions were thoroughly involved with service to the government and to the economy. It was the campus' hope that their service to the government and the business would pay off with additional funding. This process led to more administration, more students, and their extramural support base had to continually be cultivated (p. 319).

*Prior to the Reclassification to Division I.*

UNCG for years had believed, and rightly so, that their institution had not received the appropriate funding to fulfill the mission of a doctoral granting university bestowed on them in 1963. Despite the doctoral mission and large graduate enrollment (second only to Chapel Hill in 1977-78), it ranked fourteenth of fifteen in per-pupil funding (1990 they were eleventh) (Trelease, p. 416). Not only was UNC-Chapel Hill and North Carolina State receiving more financial assistance, so were new universities in the state system, UNC Charlotte and Wilmington, among others.

Kenneth Sanford (1996), an administrator at UNC Charlotte, writes about the North Carolina State Educational System as one in which educational allocations historically depend more on regional politics and personal agendas rather than on institutional needs and accomplishments. Similar feelings about state funding had been part of UNCG's administration as well. Overall, the belief was that UNCG and the city of Greensboro was and would continue to be a tier below University of North Carolina ,

North Carolina State, and UNCC, and their home cities of Chapel Hill, Raleigh and Charlotte.

The state of North Carolina experienced great success in Division I college athletics, particularly schools in the state system. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina State, and starting in the 1970's the University of North Carolina at Charlotte had received national recognition for their athletic achievements. In addition, private schools in the state, such as Duke University in Durham, and Wake Forest University in neighboring Winston-Salem, had also gained national attention for their teams' success. This meant that gaining recognition in the state as a moderately successful Division III program was virtually nonexistent.

The state perception was and still is important to UNCG because a positive opinion from the state constituency influences the UNC Board of Governors, the governing body which determines the amount of state support given to each institution. UNCG administrative thinking was that the better the state perception, the more funding. The rippling effect of continuous insufficient state appropriations was vast. Without support, UNCG would have to exist with an inability to properly support the academic programs and thus, would be unable to attract strong faculty. In addition, capital improvements, which were dreadfully needed on campus, would go unattended. Potential applicants would see a University with an insecure future based on a "dilapidated academic program with an infrastructure poorly financed" (Subject Albany) and a campus that did not compare to the modern, aesthetically pleasing grounds at other state institutions. Since a large majority of the college applicants are from North

Carolina, it is essential to remain a viable or “first-choice” candidate for North Carolina students to attend UNCG. As one subject stated,

It is pretty simple - without students, we don't have jobs, no campus..we don't have anything. But we have to give them a reason to be here. We must not forget that. What are some of the reasons? Good academics, good campus life, nice place to live, eat, you know. The state needed to support what we were trying to do, at the level we were trying to do it at. Otherwise, we should have never changed our institution. Lets go back to doing what we used to do. (Subject Albany)

In the early to mid 1980's when the discussion was initiated about reclassifying to Division I, administrators believed that such a move would help with improving the state's two most powerful financial resources – the Board of Governors and the students. Specifically, UNCG administration felt that since the allocation of funds were set by the UNC board of governors, they had to create programs that would generate positive attention among the legislature and thus generate funding similar to other doctoral granting institutions in North Carolina. UNCG Administrators also believed that they needed to stay on the minds of potential North Carolina students, particularly males, if they wanted to avoid mediocrity and admit second rate students. Also, demographic trends indicated that the pool of high school applicants was predicted to drop through the 1980's and 90's, making competition for the smaller pool even more aggressive (Trelease, 2004). Administrators felt that Division I athletics would create a better perception of both the board of governors and the potential future students of UNCG, particularly the male population. The reality was that a continued financial shortfall from the state legislature and a decreasing student body would be unacceptable, considering the funds had not been sufficient to meet the current needs of the administrators, faculty

and students at UNCG. Administrators spoke specifically about the lack of support that UNCG was receiving from the legislature:

I was a complete supporter and of course I understood the context we were in and knew that our resources from the State, our resources for faculty salaries and resources for other things were always at risk unless we were seen as a much more serious player (Subject Dunkirk)

The former chancellor was truly the architect of the physical piece of the University, what you see now. So the buildings that are being built today, they were out on line to be built long ago. We honestly were getting very little support from the state. The ideas were there but the state funding wasn't coming. (Subject Brunswick)

Some administrators believed that this lack of athletic recognition in the state not only impacted high school students' choice of college, but also impacted state funding. At the same time other schools were emerging in North Carolina through the 60's and 70's including schools like Charlotte and East Carolina and then Wilmington, and also the historically black schools who were obviously also part of the one umbrella, the 16 campuses that the Board of Governors was overseeing. In that context there was a struggle for resources and there was a desire for everyone to have as much as they could. (Subject Albany)

*During the reclassification to Division I.*

The state context did not improve during the reclassification time period as UNCG remained under funded by the state. As the athletic program moved to Division I in 1991, the state still had not substantially increased their support to UNCG. In addition, the traditional student population, particularly the male population, did not show any improvement (Trelease, 2004; University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1991).

During this time frame, UNCG administration began a three year, internal investigation (1987-1990) to examine six other schools across the country with a similar institutional profile. Compared to other peer institutions (Ball State in Indiana, Northern

Illinois, Southern Mississippi, Miami (Ohio), William and Mary in Virginia, and the State University of New York at Binghamton), UNCG received approximately \$6.4 million dollars less per year in state funding. The report however produced no immediate results for two reasons: (a). Every campus in the North Carolina system was complaining of being underfunded and (b). The report was released during a national economic recession (Trelease, 2004).

Overall, the student population showed a steady increase as UNCG was reclassifying to Division I, with the exception of a slight drop off in 1991 (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2001). However, the male student enrollment did not increase, as the student demographics were not dramatically different from those established prior to the reclassification (approximately 1/3 of the student body is male) (Trelease, 2004). In order to maintain a steady increase, admission standards were lowered during the late 1980's and into the mid 1990's until as one subject (Subject Syracuse) suggested "it reach an all-time low. These were not good times as morale on campus was not good".

*Division I status: after the reclassification.*

Resources from the state have increased considerably since the former chancellor's plea to the state legislature. Although it took several years for the state to respond to the report, one subject stated that it was:

...so important to what we were trying to do. What an eye opener that report was. It was also important because it showed we did our homework. We had been crying poor for so long and now we had some numbers, hard numbers, to back up what we were saying. I think it eventually opened some eyes. (Subject Albany)

In 1996, almost 10 years after UNCG began its own study; lawmakers in Raleigh conducted their own report and confirmed what UNCG had suggested. In response, legislature voted for a one-time allotment for an extra \$6.5 million dollars to UNCG for general and capital improvements (Trelease, 2004). The commitment did little to improve UNCG's long-term financial status as a 1999 study declared UNCG the neediest of the UNC schools. (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2000a, p.2). However in 2000, a major victory was obtained with the passage of the 2000 Higher Education Bonds, which allocated approximately \$166 million dollars to the university. The Bond has funded major building construction and campus improvements, such as a new Science Instructional Building, Maud Gatewood Studio Arts Building, and Hall for Humanities and Research Administration (Withers, 2006; 2005).

Much of the recent success has been due to the chancellor's continued work of the state legislature and the Board of Governors. One subject stated, "She continued to bang the drum, just continued to work the state, which of course is our biggest donor. This was a major victory for UNCG" (Subject Herkimer).

#### *College athletics environment*

**Theme: Many higher education institutions place heavy emphasis on intercollegiate athletics in hopes of gaining public recognition.**

As discussed in the literature review, many schools placed heavy emphasis on college athletics because of the public awareness given to Division I athletics. As media attention, namely television, increased in the 1970's and 1980's, a bigger is better attitude was created at many institutions (Chu, et al, 1985; Worsnop, 1994; Gerdy, 1997;

Freeman, 2000). The same attitude continues today at many campuses across the country as more revenue is generated from Division I college athletics. This section provides a unique perspective on how the college athletic environment described in the literature review influenced UNCG.

And um, there was embarrassment, well some people felt embarrassed, because we were a midsized university but we were in a conference at the Division III level with basically all liberal arts school in North Carolina and Virginia. The largest of those schools was maybe 1500 students. (Subject Syracuse)

*Prior to the Reclassification to Division I.*

Within the North Carolina state system, some institutions had created a winning identity with the public and had drawn a considerable amount of positive feedback to their school. The state had created a reputation for having the best men's college basketball programs in the country, and their media attention was second to none. Televised since 1957, and in an area where few strong football teams or pro sports compete for fan allegiance, A.C.C. basketball pervades public consciousness from Maryland down through the South. That is especially true in North Carolina, where four teams (Duke, North Carolina State, Wake Forest and North Carolina) are located within a 100-mile area (The Atlantic Coast Conference, 2005).

It was unreasonable to think that UNCG would ever compete athletically with the Big Four, however those who believed the move to Division I could help UNCG become part of a positive, entertaining, and exciting college athletic environment cited UNC Charlotte success in men's basketball in the late 1970's. In 1977, little known UNC Charlotte (UNCC) advanced to the NCAA Men's Basketball Final Four by beating the

University of Michigan. Gaining this kind of national attention was certainly not expected from a school that only became a four year institution just 14 years earlier, had played its first college basketball game in 1965, and had only been playing major college basketball since 1972 (Attner, 1977; Sanford, 1996).

The Final Four brought attention to the already strong town and gown cooperation between the University and Charlotte. Sanford (1996) details the strong support of city officials and business leaders, as the school was transformed from Charlotte Center to Charlotte Community College to Charlotte College to the University of North Carolina at Charlotte; an institution that offered limited number of courses to one that provided numerous undergraduate and graduate programs; a basketball team that did not exist to a national championship caliber program.

Attner's (1977) Washington Post article describes the impact of the Final Four appearance by stating, "the city and its state college have discovered each other. Citizens who have never visited the school (located eight miles north of Charlotte) have dropped by this week, just to see what kind of institution produced such a fine basketball team" (p. D1).

Those at UNCG supporting the move to Division I, cited Charlotte as an example of how basketball success helped improve an identity crisis and lack of public attention. Many felt that if Charlotte could achieve success at a high level, why couldn't Greensboro? Some saw it as a way to increase exposure and to help create an identity that was apparently missing at Greensboro. Administrators and business leaders in Greensboro who watched the growth of UNCC and Charlotte in the late 70's and early

80's became aware that much of the constituency at UNCC certainly believed that athletic success helped promote their institution and their city.

Douglas Orr, vice chancellor for student affairs was quoted as saying, "There is no question that we've had an identity crisis, even within our state. Even though we've been around for a while, it's taken people time to discover us. It takes time to develop ties and I have to think basketball has helped us get started in this direction." (Attner, 1977, D1)

As beneficial as the State system has been, perhaps the biggest downfall was that other schools were always in the shadows of UNC Chapel Hill. In Attner's (1977) article, an alumni at UNCC, suggested that the Final Four appearance would help UNCC create an identity from UNC Chapel Hill. The alumnus describes UNC Chapel Hill as "the kingpin". The UNC Charlotte alumnus goes on to state:

It used to be we didn't brag about attending UNCC. We'd say, 'Oh, I'm going to UNCC for two years and then transfer to Chapel Hill.' "I even know grads of UNCC that have got class rings with blue stones, to make it seem like it was a Chapel Hill ring. But no more; we brag about going to UNCC now" (p.D1).

Kevin King, a member of the 1977 basketball team echoes similar feelings in the article, "That entire school (Chapel Hill), they think they are better than anyone else," said King. "They call themselves 'the' University of North Carolina, like we don't exist" (p. D1).

The excitement that was being created in Charlotte produced feelings in Greensboro in which one subject summed up by saying:

...it was driven by envy. The business community was so envious, you know because they thought it should be Greensboro. But, on the other hand, something special was happening in Charlotte and people in the state were noticing. The environment that was being created in Charlotte had a lasting impression in North Carolina, and particularly in Greensboro. (Subject Syracuse)

*During the reclassification to Division I.*

On the heels of the success in Charlotte, and after years of placing an emphasis on athletics at UNCG, the University began the ascension to Division I. However, some constituents did not believe that this environment would be beneficial. Certainly there were negative aspects of the big time college athletics atmosphere that many at UNCG felt could truly damage the history, mission, and ultimately the integrity of the University. As UNCG began publicly discussing the move to Division I, major athletic powers that perhaps placed too much emphasis on winning were experiencing tremendous negative publicity.

At Tulane University, nine people were indicted in March of 1985 in a scheme to shave points in two Metro Conference basketball games. The scandal prompted Tulane officials to drop the men's basketball program, despite objections from students and alumni (Boeck, 1990). That same year, recruiting scandal erupted at two prominent church related schools, Southern Methodist University and Texas Christian University, involving illegal payments to football players (Vasquez, 1985). Beginning in 1985 and over the next two years, the NCAA began investigating the Kentucky basketball program after the Lexington Herald-Leader reported in October that 31 of 33 former players interviewed told of NCAA violations and 26 admitted participating (McMane, 1985).

Finally, a drug scandal, involving abuse of performance enhancing drugs, also erupted on the campuses of Clemson University, Vanderbilt and Colgate (McMane, 1985).

Then in 1990, as UNCG was one year away from becoming Division I, a recruiting and point shaving scandal hit North Carolina State (Jacobs, 1989; Boeck, 1990;). Those who believed that reclassifying to Division I would bring UNCG into an environment where cheating was rampant cited North Carolina State as their most prominent example of what could go wrong at Division I. One administrator described the tension that was created at UNCG from the North Carolina State turmoil:

At the same time that the university was looking strongly to go to Division I athletics, NC State was imploding. Their athletic director was also their basketball coach, Jim Valvano, and I think there were some strange arrangements with the chancellor. The bottom line is that it was a really really bad scenario. So our faculty were looking at it saying, "Oh my Golly, why would you even think about taking on this ugly sector of Division 1?" Like all of Division 1 is this ugly specter. I'm here to tell you that it isn't. (Subject Brunswick)

The Raleigh campus had been devastated by reports of players illegally receiving money, academic fraud, and a point shaving scandal. Although not all of the allegations were proven true, there was more than enough to have a chancellor fired, a head coach forced to accept a buyout, and a school's once proud basketball tradition ruined.

However, greater than all of this was the damage it had done to the academic reputation of the institution. "When you add up all the disclosures, all the negative publicity, you have the (Exxon) Valdez oil spill of university athletics," said Ray Camp, who joined N.C. State faculty members in calling for Valvano's dismissal (Boeck, 1990, p. 1C).

With regard to the reputation in the academic arena, "I'm most concerned how this will

affect the students," Camp said. "It could be potentially damaging to the value of their academic degrees. They're the losers in the process."

"Our name is getting dragged through the mud," said Wade Babcock, a sophomore. "N.C. State goes on the diploma. When you get a job, people will see the name on the paper and say, 'Isn't that the school with the basketball scandal? Hey, if there is corruption, 20 people are involved and there are 26,000 still going to class, taking tests. That's not seen'" (Boeck, 1990, p. 1C).

The North Carolina State scandal, among others, seemed to have the greatest impact on the reclassification process at UNCG. The problems at one of the State system institutions hit very close to home and certainly heightened the UNCG faculty's awareness of negative publicity among Division I athletic programs. Additional questions about UNCG's plan to maintain academic and financial integrity became a major issue.

*Division I status: after the reclassification.*

Since 1991, UNCG has maintained a commitment to Division I athletics, however as one administrator states:

This is not big time athletics here. We are Division I athletics, not big time athletics". The difference between the two, the subject claims is important to distinguish, because it has been fundamental to keeping out some of the bad elements of what people associate with college athletics. (Subject Brunswick)

At UNCG, the administration sees a big difference between what they are (Division I athletics) and "big-time" athletics. It is true based on classification because UNCG does not have a football team, and therefore is not classified as a major Division

I-A athletic program. It also appears that UNCG has avoided making a full commitment to the big-time athletics philosophy. The environment that the athletic department has maintained is a student first culture, where athletes are recruited and retained first and foremost on their academic ability. In addition, the problems that have plagued other college athletic programs have thus far eluded the Spartans. In particular UNCG has not had any major recruiting or administrative violations. However, some of the big time athletics environment has become part of UNCG's Division I program. The financial context does indicate trends that are similar to other Division I institutions (Fulks, 2003).

UNCG's athletics budget continues to grow, (in 2004 UNCG had just under a \$6,000,000 budget) which is not comparable to the expenses occurred by their Division I counterparts that play major college football, but is on par for schools that do not participate in Division I-A football (Fulks, 2003, see also Appendix C). Although expenditures have not increased to the level of some of their peers, it can not be overlooked that UNCG athletics has spent millions of dollars running a Division I program. Administrators and coaches have benefited somewhat from the environment as they negotiate to be paid similar to their counterparts at other institutions.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the college athletics environment that has become part of UNCG is the importance of winning. Administrators will be quick to point out that unlike at some other schools, UNCG does not promote a "winning at all costs mentality". Two administrators point out facts about other aspects of the program that are just as, if not more, important than winning:

Winning is important. But I'm not going to tell you that it is more important now than when we were Division III. It was important then, during the transition, and now. Winning at the sake or the risk of cannibalizing your student side? No. That is not the expectation at this institution. However, it's important to win and the athletes want to win. (Subject Brunswick)

We want to win, and really we need to win. But we do it within the framework of student-athlete. Do we take chances, have exceptions, yes. But we do not rely on that to win. We rely on good student-athletes. (Subject Altamont)

However, coaches have essentially been fired or contracts have not been renewed for not winning enough. Since 2000, 14 have coaches have been removed from their coaching position, suggesting that the importance of winning may be stressed. However, one administrator suggests that not winning enough was the end result of many problems within the program. A coach's contract not renewed or a coach being fired, was because of many reasons, which at the end of the day, resulted in losing more games than they won. One administrator stated,

You don't lose your job typically for one thing...it is usually a pattern of things. Losing games is not a result of one problem, it usually represents many problems... I don't know anyone that got fired for not winning in this program. Substantially, the running of the program was the reason you got let go or it was suggested that you resign. The running of the program had everything to do with the details of the organization and administration of the program. And the concepts and precepts that you set forth. If you weren't living up to those, then you were liable and you were no longer viewed in that position as the coach. Some people saw that themselves and moved out or others got nudged because of all of this things. But because of winning and losing? Sometimes when you lose it becomes a reflection of your inability to operate a successful program. (Subject Hartwick).

One coach/administrator suggested that her commitment to winning is very simple and straightforward at UNCG:

I have to win! (Laughter.) Am I bringing in a poor student – No. I am trying to find the best student I can get, who maybe can win a little more for me. So it is just a matter of ...it is just another notch. You have to recruit two sides instead of one side. Have you broken any rules? Have we altered our standards? Um – No. (Subject Altamont)

### *Process*

The following section outlines the process of changing the athletic department from Division III to Division I. Along with documenting the “how” of the reclassification, the process section also addresses specific decisions along the way that had long term effects on the constituency. This section is divided into two parts. The first, is an examination of the methodical approach taken by UNCG administration to transition from Division III to Division I, which administrators describe as “an unprecedented move in NCAA history” (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005c ). Throughout the first part of the section, key external intercollegiate athletic groups are identified and their roles in the process are highlighted, namely the NCAA and Division I member institutions. The second part examines on-campus constituents, other than the administration, that had the greatest impact on the reclassification process: students, and faculty. These specific groups were examined due to their significant and constant role before, during, and after the move to Division I.

#### *The transition to Division I*

**Theme: The decisions made by the UNCG administration throughout the process of moving to Division I were vital to the long term success of the University and the athletic program.**

**Theme: The regulations of the NCAA and UNCG's ability to gain conference affiliation affected the reclassification process.**

The path to get to Division I was tedious and long, as one administrator (Subject Hartwick) put it, "mainly due to all of the policies and procedures the NCAA follows". The NCAA regulations, along with the procedures established by the UNCG administration laid the plan for moving to Division I. One subject would later say about the meticulous process:

We planned so well at the beginning that when we got to those years when we moved up, we were ready. We knew what it was going to take and we did it. We eliminated almost all of the surprises for our Chancellor and Board. We knew about our upcoming expenses and we planned for them appropriately. That really could have been a big downfall for us, but luckily we had administrators on the same page and we worked together years earlier to prepare. (Subject Brunswick)

The process of placing a heavier emphasis on the role of intercollegiate athletics at UNCG began on the first day the chancellor took office (Trelease, 2004). In fact, as one subject stated, the idea to improve the intercollegiate athletic department had been on the "table in the 1970's as well, however the Chancellor did not initiate any radical changes to the program, mainly due to faculty resistance" (Subject Albany)

Rather than rush to move to Division I, the Chancellor originally took steps to strengthen the Division III program in 1981 by making several internal administrative changes. Also at that time, a commitment to make additional athletic improvements would be reviewed continuously over the next five years (Davis, 1987, Trelease, 2004). This initial step of "cleaning up" athletics in the early 1980's was important, because as the one administrator stated,

At that point, we were not even a very well organized Division III program. It was neglected; there was not any real money behind the program. No facilities. It was undernourished. It was more or less, if we had success fine, and if we didn't, fine. To be honest, the athletic program, at that point, was not a credit to our university. (Subject Mount)

Administrators had expectations of providing more structure to their athletic department by creating reporting lines directly to the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and downsizing the number of teams, with the thought of offering better quality teams. This philosophy was certainly more in line with characteristics associated with Division I programs rather than the commitment to participation seen at Division III. The leadership believed that this would stabilize the department and concentrate more financial support directly to the chosen teams (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992).

The renewed commitment to athletics began in February 1981, when UNCG's athletic program was moved from the school of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance to a newly formed department called Intercollegiate Athletics (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, University memorandum 1985 Strategic Planning Retreat). One interviewee identified the move to a separate, non-academic department as an "opportunity for the University to restructure reporting lines and allow the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs to direct supervision over athletics" (Subject Syracuse).

Other organizational decisions were made between 1981 and 1983 that helped form the structure that the Chancellor was seeking. UNCG discontinued 3 sports programs: men's and women's swimming and women's golf. This reorganization left

four sports for men and four sports for women. By the 1982-1983 season, four full time coaches were assigned to coach two sports. Lastly, the hiring of a full-time athletic director took place in September, 1983. The modifications in the athletic department were completed with the understanding that the “ultimate goal was to achieve regional recognition in all sports and national visibility in some” (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, University memorandum 1985 Strategic Planning Retreat).

The changes that had taken place in the early 1980’s did not completely satisfy the administration. Much success had come from the administration’s plan of regional and national recognition at the Division III level. Fresh off of back-to-back Division III men’s soccer national championships (1982 and 1983), the then chancellor and athletic director began the process of a possible Division I reclassification for the men’s soccer program only (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992).

Leadership had determined that more could be done to improve the athletic department. At that point in time, UNCG, under NCAA guidelines, had three possible options. In a memorandum from the then chancellor to the athletic director, on May 24, 1984, the initial plan for reclassification was stated. The chancellor wished to move only the men’s soccer program to Division I, while leaving the other sports at Division III (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, University memorandum May 24, 1984).

The NCAA, which is the governing body of intercollegiate athletics, influences many membership decisions through numerous rules, regulations and policies. Similar to other governing bodies, the NCAA sets specific rules to protect the membership. The

policies associated with reclassification also had regulations that limited potential Division I members. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), in accordance with the Bylaw 10-6, states “that a Division III member that has a sport classified in Division I is required to apply the rules of both divisions or the most stringent rule if both divisions have a rule concerning the same issue” (NCAA Manual, 2003, p.259). For example, an institution would be required to apply the financial aid limitations of Division III classification, rather than granting athletically related financial aid normally allowed by Division I member institutions. The second option available to UNCG was to move all their programs to Division II, and moving its men’s soccer program to Division I. However, the administration decided that this option would not be feasible, mostly due to the limited number of Division II teams within the southern region. The last option was remaining at Division III or moving the entire athletic program to Division I. When it became apparent that multi-divisional status with men’s soccer competing at Division I was not practical (mainly due to increase operational costs with the other programs), a study of the feasibility of elevating *all* of the sports programs to Division I status began (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992).

Beginning in the spring of 1985 and continuing over the next year, the chancellor and athletic director met with other vice chancellors, the Board of Trustees, as well as the faculty, staff, and students to discuss a possible transition. On March 12, 1985, a strategic planning session was held specifically to discuss the elevation of the athletic program (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992). In June of 1985, the Chancellor established advisory committees for the 1985-1986 academic year specifically

to address how intercollegiate athletics would impact enrollment, institutional visibility, fund-raising, the budget process, and facilities (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, University memorandum, Office of the Chancellor). Later that summer, the advisory committees reported back to the Chancellor and made the following recommendations:

“We appear to have gained the maximum in public exposure and awareness and in student support that is possible to achieve in a Division III program. A divisional shift would be widely accepted by the undergraduate enrollment, with students indicating their readiness to support through attendance and higher fees (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, University memorandum, June 11, 1985). One subject referred to a survey given to students, asking about the possibility of the reclassification. “We did a survey here in 1985, (looking at his notes), 76.2% of all students believe that student social life would be enhanced if the athletic competition was raised” (Subject Syracuse).

The advisory committee also believed that the move was the “next logical step for UNCG which is seeking, as a complex doctoral granting institution, to achieve appropriate regional and national recognition for the excellence of all its programs” (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, University memorandum, June 11, 1985). Based on initial findings, the advisory committee recommended a move to Division II for the mandatory three years, with an ongoing review to move to Division I. In September of 1985, the Board of Trustees was presented with the idea of elevating the athletic program.

From September 1985 until February 1987, two significant issues arose that would impact the reclassification process. The first was the growing concern from campus constituents of a possible move to Division I. The question of elevating all sports programs from Division III to Division I was “intensely scrutinized on campus”, particularly by faculty. One interviewee described the scrutiny:

It was one major fight after another, but I would guess you would have them anywhere... When you talk about moving as quickly as we did, when we were making one change after another, after another, after another... We were fortunate, we just kept rolling. (Subject Altamont)

The on-campus bickering between the faculty and the administration would remain a constant theme and would eventually impact the leadership at the institution. The faculty role in the process is discussed in greater detail later in the section.

The second major aspect during 1985 and beyond was the developing relationship between the NCAA, other Division I member institutions, and UNCG administrators. The athletic administrators began the process of working very closely with NCAA officials to make sure compliance would be met during all parts of the reclassification. Administrators paid particularly close attention to the academic requirements as the University had to apply the more stringent academic rules of Division II, and then at Division I (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, University memorandum, April 4, 1986).

UNCG athletic administrators and other university administrators began an evaluation process of other Division I institutions that shared a similar institutional profile to UNCG. Over the next two years, UNCG administration and coaches visited

various institutions throughout the Southeast (see Appendix K for complete list) to scrutinize their Division I programs (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992). The result of these visits allowed UNCG administrators to evaluate each school's Division I athletic program, the interaction with the university, the financial checks and balances, the academic programs, and the long term plans of each institution. In the end, UNCG was able to identify each school's strengths and weaknesses. The benefit, as subjects stated, was very valuable:

We could see what schools did well and what they did wrong. We would go back and have meetings after each school and say, 'we should do this and we should do that'. But we also said, 'let's make sure not to do it this way'. We had the chance of learning from their mistakes. (Subject Mount)

One thing that we learned that was very important to the process was that many of these institutions did not have strong financial control over the athletic fundraising vehicle. The boosters were controlling the athletic department. We did not want that. Once we got done with these visits, the Chancellor determined that the financial responsibility of athletics would start with him. (Subject Brunswick)

After researching many other Division I institutions and evaluating what would work best at UNCG, the upper administration and the Board of Trustees set fund raising policies in order to accept private support for athletic scholarships. The chancellor, along with the advisory committee, determined if a final move to Division I would be made. The operating budget would then be supported by increased student fees and athletic scholarships would need to be funded by external donations. The fund raising effort was critical because the chancellor would not ask the Board of Trustees to approve the plan to move to Division I unless the initial fund raising effort was successful (University of

North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, A Proposal for Upgrading Intercollegiate Athletics, September 1986).

The initial fund raising project, titled “Division I in ‘91” was spearheaded by a committee that would be affectionately referred to as the Big Five. Each person was a prominent leader in Greensboro and each had the money to support the campaign as well as the clout to get others involved. The plan was to get 200 individuals to pledge \$2,500 for 5 years in order to get a continuous flow of \$500,000 per year (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, UNCG Division I in ’91 proposal). The sales pitch was simple and straightforward: the presentation stressed the mutual University/community benefit that could be achieved. “Obviously, for the benefit of all, a stronger and more visible University is in everyone’s best interest” (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, University memorandum August 12, 1986).

In a memorandum to the members of the Board of Trustees on February 16, 1987, the chancellor outlined significant issues that he felt needed to be highlighted in order for the Board to understand the importance of a successful move to Division I. The memorandum identified two points that provided rationale for why it was the opportune time to reclassify to Division I and two points that would address the appropriate method for moving to Division I (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, University memorandum, February 16, 1987).

First, the chancellor suggested that it was essential to build on the “excellence of our current athletic programs”. As shown early, UNCG had great success in men’s soccer and women’s basketball and moderate success in other programs, all without

much support from the University. The administration felt that given the appropriate support and attention, moderate success at Division I could be possible.

Next, he stressed the role Division I athletics would have on student life. The chancellor believed that Division I athletics would be another benefit to the improved student life programs at UNCG, and reminded the Board that the competition has had strong extracurricular programs for years. “Recent progress in student living is encouraging. Housing, dining and recreational programs have been enhanced.” However, “these advantages have been available at most other public campuses in the system for years.” Waiting to enhance the student life program would only hurt UNCG’s ability to attract students. In addition, the chancellor continued to stress the importance of student life by suggesting that it will have a tremendous impact on improving the academic programs. The former chancellor writes, “Failure to grasp the academic significance of these extracurricular matters will almost certainly prove fatal to the efforts of those charged with attracting and retaining gifted students” (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, University memorandum, February 16, 1987). One interviewee suggested that the previous sentence is “the most important sentence to understanding the transition because it provides rationale beyond wins and losses” (Subject Albany).

Third, the chancellor addressed the financial issue with the Board, in particular the plan of covering the increased expenses associated with a Division I program. The financial plan outlined called for the “University to raise approximately \$400,000 a year for athletic scholarships. In addition, increased operating costs will be drawn from

student fees, which in 1986-1987 were \$58 dollars or 13.1 % of all student fees.”

(University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, University memorandum, February 16, 1987).

Finally, the Chancellor highlighted a very important, and perhaps overlooked structural procedure. The Chancellor writes that due to numerous scandals at major Division I programs, “administrative oversight at the highest level is essential”. Included in the administrative oversight is to maintain financial and program controls within the University and not by outside support groups or booster clubs. An examination of the University’s organizational charts shows that in fact, the athletic director, a position that was only a part time position (1983) three years early, was now situated under the Dean of Student Affairs. It was under these four points, that the process of reclassification to Division I began at UNCG (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, University memorandum, February 16, 1987).

On February 19, 1987, the plan to move to Division I was approved by the Board of Trustees. The NCAA had a specific process that needed to be followed by UNCG in order to reclassify the athletic program from Division III to Division II and then to Division I. Administrators became well aware of what needed to be done in order to satisfy the NCAA policies. UNCG would have to transition from Division III to II and remain at Division II for a three year waiting period before applying for Division I status. It was UNCG’s hope and the NCAA’s plan that this process would occur over a five-year time frame (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992).

With each move up, UNCG would have to operate under Bylaw 10-6, stating that when having multiple classifications, the institution is “required to apply the rules of both divisions or the most stringent rule if both divisions have a rule concerning the same issue” For example, in an April 4, 1984 letter from the NCAA to the director of athletics at UNCG, “your institution would be required to apply the financial aid limitations of Division III classification, rather than granting athletically related financial aid normally allowed by Division I member institution.’ In addition, academic requirements became stricter as an institution moved from Division III to II to I (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, NCAA letter, April 4, 1984).

Under 1986 NCAA regulations, the transition of elevating an entire athletic program from Division III to Division I requires at least five years. In 1986-1987, UNCG intercollegiate athletics remained as a Division III member but began playing under Division II eligibility rules. In 1988-1989, UNCG became a full member of Division II, operating under Division II rules and for the first time, playing exclusively all Division II opponents. As a full member of Division II, UNCG would compete as an independent institution and for the first time, provide athletic aid (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992).

The thought of staying at Division II was never a real consideration because as one subject stated, “it was not practical for the long term goals of the University” (Subject Albany). All of the constituents that had been associated with UNCG understood that Division II was just a means to get to Division I. Therefore, the University began placing more details in their “Division I in ’91” plan.

The next three years (1988-89, 1989-1990, and 1990-1991) would be spent at Division II. This was the final phase before becoming a full member in Division I. The NCAA mandated that an institution must stay at its new membership level for at least three years, so UNCG knew that Division I would come no earlier than the 1991-1992 season. UNCG used this three year time frame to study where it was (Division III) where it currently stood (Division II) and where it wanted to go (Division I) (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992).

Division II was never really a serious option for the UNCG athletics program for two main reasons: First, logistically, it was not a good match. Staying in Division II would make operating all of the teams extremely difficult due to the heavy costs associated with scholarships, scheduling, traveling, and recruiting. More importantly, the expenses incurred would not be offset by any revenue streams, because Division II programs had typically attracted very little exposure (Ebony, 1989). As one subject explained:

Division II just would not have worked. For starters, the public doesn't really care about Division II. It is similar to Division III with the lack of outside attention you receive, but it is *so* different than Division III in that the expenses become much higher because of the athletic aid. Also, don't forget that we didn't really have any Division II schools around us at the time. There was the CIAA; which was made up of the black institutions in North Carolina. This didn't suit us... Those schools didn't suit us in size, mission, academics, athletics; really there was no match at all. So, really we couldn't go Division II. So we either had to stay at Division III, then to become an independent at Division II and that wasn't good, or continue our move to Division I. (Subject Altamont)

Second, administrators felt that Division II would not have matched their reasoning for improving the athletic programs. UNCG needed to address student apathy,

and gain public recognition and financial support in order to improve the academic programs. Neither of those would be addressed by staying at Division II (Knapp, 1989; Tomasini, 2003).

In order to complete the move to Division I, UNCG needed to add teams to meet the NCAA criteria for a Division I program. In 1988 UNCG began adding teams, with the goal of being Division I compliant by the 1991-1992 season. The first team added was women's soccer in the fall of 1988 (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005c).

While at Division III, UNCG had been competing in four men's sports and four women's sports. In order to compete at Division I, UNCG would need to add four sports. After considering the pros and cons of many sports, UNCG decided the most beneficial programs to add would be baseball and cross-country for men and soccer and golf for women (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, University Memorandum, December 19, 1986).

After years of conversation and building up funding, the University was ready to establish new teams. In 1990-1991 baseball and women's golf were added as Division I programs. Baseball was very attractive because of the potential to recruit male students from within the state, due to the strong baseball infrastructure in the city, the state, and the Southern region (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, University memorandum, December 19, 1986). The biggest concern for adding baseball was the lack of a University facility, which would become a major on-campus issue a few years later.

Men's cross-country was easy to add and required low costs and did not require any major facility improvements (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005c).

The sponsorship of women's soccer and golf was very popular among alumnae and students. Although both sports were new to Division I, each had the potential to grow. Administration felt strongly that the women's soccer would build on the soccer success established on the men's side and could grow to be a national contender rapidly. The women's golf program had already established itself as a national power before it was dropped in 1980. Bringing both female sports to the Division I level would provide UNCG with the ability to attract top notch female athletes who could compete at the local and national levels. Each team had to compete by 1990-1991 in order to be in compliance with Division I standards by 1991-1992 (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, University memorandum, February 16, 1987).

Also in the late 1980's the need to identify a suitable Division I conference became a top priority. In the spring of 1988, the UNCG administration began to closely examine Division I conference affiliation (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992). With Division I being only 3 years away, it was of the utmost importance to become a member of a strong, respectable Division I conference. Membership into a well-respected conference would provide several benefits for a new Division I institution. First, UNCG would align itself with "like institutions" competing against schools with similar "student enrollment, academic goals, geographic location, and athletic talent" (Subject Mount). Second, it would provide credibility to UNCG's athletic program, as it would compete with established Division I programs. Third, it would give UNCG's

student-athletes a chance to compete for conference championships, receive conference awards, as well as a stronger consideration for national accolades. Last, it would significantly reduce administrative nuisances, such as scheduling and traveling, both of which could drastically impact the athletic budget (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992).

UNCG began its conference membership appeals with the Colonial Athletic Association (CAA) in 1988 with a letter to the commissioner of the CAA, from the Chancellor, stating clearly that, “the University wants to become an active member of the Colonial Athletic Association in 1991”. Administration felt a strong match between the academic and athletic goals of the institution and the conference members, which at the time consisted of American University, East Carolina University, George Mason University, James Madison University, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, University of Richmond, The United States Naval Academy, and the College of William & Mary (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, February, 8, 1988).

However, shortly after the initial inquiry the NCAA Basketball Committee revised Regulation 1-6-(b)-(1) which among other things redefined the meaning of an “established Division I institution and an existing Division I conference” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 1989, p. 207). This impacted UNCG and any conference that would add them to their membership because it would increase the number of years a team or a conference had to wait to be eligible to participate in the NCAA men’s basketball tournament. Over the next two plus years, the University judiciously worked to gain relief from the ruling from the NCAA Men’s Division I Basketball Committee.

Finally, UNCG was granted relief in 1991 from the eight year waiting period for participation into the Division I men's basketball tournament, and was grandfathered into the three year waiting period that was NCAA mandated when they began the reclassification process (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992). However, in the time that had passed, conferences such as the Colonial Athletic Association had cooled on the idea of adding UNCG to its membership. In 1992, UNCG began discussions with the Big South Conference and was accepted into the Conference in May 22, 1992, thus ending its four year stay as a Division II and Division I independent (The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, 2005c)

UNCG's stay in the Big South did not last long. In fall 1995, the University decided that it would leave the Big South Conference. In order to avoid any financial obligations to the Conference, UNCG could not leave the Big South for two years after the official decision. Therefore, UNCG would play the 1995-1996 and the 1996-1997 season in the Big South. During their short tenure, the Spartans dominated the Big South, winning twenty team championships. This was highlighted in the 1994-1995 season, when UNCG won six league championships and captured its first Big South Commissioner's Cup for overall athletic excellence (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2001, 2005c).

Leaving the Big South Conference meant that UNCG would either have to return to a Division I independent or find another conference in which to become a member by the 1997-1998 season (Atkinson, 1995, October 11). Making such a difficult decision to leave the Big South mainly came down to the disparities between the future plans of

UNCG and the future plans of the Big South. As the athletic director would state in a 1995 article, "Sometimes it's just best said that there are philosophical differences. This is just a philosophical difference" (p. C1). In addition, the Big South had been recently burned by members departing for bigger and better conferences and was in the process of imposing heavy financial penalties on future members that wished to leave. Rather than waiting to abide by the heavier penalties, the University decided to begin the process of leaving the Big South.

Conveniently, the Southern Conference, a more established athletic conference with more national recognition and financial potential than the Big South, had just lost a university to another conference. The Southern Conference boasted television contracts in football and men's basketball with SportsSouth, while the Big South had no such exposure. Talks began almost immediately to expand the Southern Conference and add strong universities that match the current membership; UNCG, for numerous reasons became a candidate (Atkinson, 1995, November 2).

The Southern Conference made great strides in the late 1980's to get into the Greensboro market because at the time the Triad media market ranked a respectable 48<sup>th</sup> in the country. The city of Greensboro had already served as host of the Southern Conference men's soccer tournament. More importantly, the Southern Conference signed a five-year contract (1996-2001) with the Greensboro Coliseum to host the league's men's and women's basketball tournaments. In addition, UNCG's success in basketball, baseball and soccer would provide an immediate boost to a league that had settled into mediocrity in those sports in the 1980's (Atkinson, 1995, November 9).

The Southern Conference would provide UNCG with a tremendous amount of recognition and a considerable amount of stability as it continued to grow in Division I. As the UNCG administration was examining the Southern Conference, some important points became very clear. First, the last time a school left the Southern Conference was 1977 (William & Mary). Compare that to the status of the Big South where counting UNCG, the Big South had seen four attempted defections in three years (1993, 1994 & 1995) (Atkinson, 1995, November 2). Southern Conference schools had tremendous regional recognition based on tradition, strong academic standing, and little to no athletic scandals. Finally, UNCG is centrally located among the nine Southern schools - Appalachian, The Citadel, Davidson, East Tennessee State, Furman, Georgia Southern, UT-Chattanooga, Virginia Military and Western Carolina. It shares similar academic philosophies with most, if not all members of the Southern Conference, and had potential athletic rivals in Appalachian State, Western Carolina, and Davidson (Atkinson, 1995, November 9).

The only major hurdle was that UNCG did not have a Division I-AA football program and the Southern Conference was built on a strong tradition of Division I-AA football success, with only one member not playing Division I-AA football (Davidson University). In the initial conversations, it appeared that either UNCG was going to have to add football (a move that the administration was not going to make) or the Southern Conference was going to have to stray from its current policy of adding only football playing institutions. In the fall of 1997, UNCG began play in the more prestigious, yet more competitive Southern Conference.

As described earlier, the UNCG athletic programs did not win as frequently as they had during the earlier stages of Division I. Subjects interviewed attributed the lack of success to the improve competition in the Southern Conference and the idea that the newness of Division I has worn off on campus.

*Constituency Role in the Process*

**Theme: The process of moving to Division I was influenced by the interaction, reaction, and action of UNCG's faculty and students.**

The restructuring of the athletic department from Division III to Division I in only five years followed a process established by the administration at UNCG, aided by the local leaders in Greensboro, and guided by the policies of the NCAA. In addition, other on campus constituencies played a role in the course of action taken by the administration during reclassification, namely the students, faculty, and alumni. Although these groups initially may not have had much input in the decision to move to Division I, their actions and reactions to the administrative decisions influenced the transition, before, during, and after the move to Division I. The following section examines more closely the role of these groups in the process.

*Students' interaction.*

According to the administration at UNCG, the students' action, or lack of action, toward athletics prior to moving to Division I was a major reason why the decision to reclassify was made. As stated earlier, administrators provided as one of their justifications to move to Division I decreasing student apathy (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992; Trelease, 2004). This section first provides an historical

but brief examination of student life prior to the reclassification. An assessment of student life is important because it provides a sampling of the feelings that were present when students voted for an upgrade in the athletics program. Next, the section examines the power the students had on the decision to reclassify based on their financial role in the transition.

In the early 1980's, the Department of Student Life, in conjunction with the Chancellor's Office, made a tremendous effort to improve student life. An examination of the student experience began with the dormitories. Living conditions on campus were, as one subject stated, "Awful. Enough to make a student leave for better accommodations" (Subject Albany). The previous administration had made it difficult for any student life changes to be made. The administration in the late 1970's and throughout the early 1980's made numerous changes on campus to renovate dormitories, and build new and improved living conditions. In addition, special attention was given to dining services, health services and other areas of student life that had long been neglected under the previous administration (Trelease, 2004).

Student activities were essentially non-existent, and the weekend life normally found at other universities did not exist at UNCG. As one student stated, "It was a Monday-Friday campus, at best." (Trelease, 2004, p.457). Over the last several years, UNCG had developed nicknames such as UNCGone, and Suitcase College, that would support such a quote (Atkinson, 1998).

Administrators in the early 1980's moved quickly to enhance the students' experience, with one area being the addition of Greek life. By fall 1981, seven

fraternities and seven sororities were officially recognized on campus (Trelease, 2004). This was a big first step to creating a new on-campus culture that was more in line with traditional student life. One administrator suggested that this was the first in many steps necessary to advance UNCG:

We had nothing here. We had no campus life at all, with the exception of some traditions that were here from the WC days, but even those were not strong. The establishment of the Greek life was our way of saying that we knew we needed to improve the college experience. We were tough on them; they could not step out of line because those first couple of years was important to any other long term plans we had to make their experience better. If this started out bad, then who knows what would have happened. (Subject Albany)

Around the same time, administration began looking at improving the student recreation and intramural programs, as well as building an athletic program that students could rally around. Student affairs presented several surveys to students and asked them about their feelings on upgrading the athletic program, with the understanding that if the athletic program was to improve, the student fees would increase. Students overwhelmingly supported the idea of playing “big-time athletics” (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, University memorandum June 11, 1985).

The June 11, 1985 document from the Chancellor to the Vice Chancellors provided additional data to suggest students wanted and were ready to support a reclassification to Division I athletics:

1. In 1979, a survey of undergraduate student perceptions revealed that 64% of the students believed that the level of athletic competition should be increased.

2. In 1981, 64% of the students once again “supported a subsidized intercollegiate athletic program.
3. In 1985, 76.2% of all students felt that social life would be enhanced if the level of athletic competition was raised.

Administrators were encouraged by the survey results and cited improvement to student life as one of the major rationales for moving to Division I (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, University memorandum June 11, 1985). One administrator suggested “that the students had grown tired of not having what others had. And students appeared to be ready for a change. They wanted and deserved a better campus” (Subject Albany).

The indifferent attitude that existed on campus was not just related to the athletic program, but rather to the entire university. One subject stated,

It was about being proud to be a Spartan. Our alumni had little pride, our students had little pride. We wanted to make our students’ college experience be better than it was...so when they look back there is a sense of pride, not disappointment, not apathy. Athletics has a way of being that aspect of campus life that students and alumni can be proud of. (Subject Brunswick)

Another subject agreed,

All of these changes were important because we wanted to improve student life...the reality was that prior to all of these changes, many students were not making UNCG their first choice; UNCG was what was left. So a lot of students came here with a sense of disappointment and we were not helping them get over that feeling. There was always a comparison to what the other state schools were doing. You know things like, if I was at State or Chapel Hill, then I would have this or that..(Subject Albany)

Another faculty/administrator felt,

...that the feelings that the students had at the time certainly influenced the vote to supporting intercollegiate athletics. They wanted more from campus, from the student environment...college sports was an area they wanted to see improve. (Subject Syracuse)

The vote to support Division I was important because it was a decision that thrust the students into a prominent supporting role, not just as a fan, but as the financial backbone. An administrator summed up the importance of the vote by stating,

They weren't supporting the vote by saying, 'if you go I will support' but it was rather, 'you will go *because* I support' – I mean the students were voting not to go to Division I, but really if they would *pay* to go to Division I. Big difference! I am not sure they voted understanding the difference. (Subject Whitehall)

The students' financial role in supporting Division I athletics has been consistent since the initial plan in 1985: student fees pay for the operational budget of the athletic program. The student fees do not cover athletic scholarships. The cost of scholarships comes from dollars raised by the Spartan Club (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2007a). Essentially without the student fees, it would not be feasible to have a Division I athletic program. A point that was made in a memorandum from the former Chancellor to the Board of Trustee

It is important to note that since moving to Division I, the intercollegiate athletics budget has benefited over the years from an increase in student fees, increase in student enrollment or a combination of both. When the plan to reclassify was developed in 1985-1986, UNCG student fee dollars used to support intercollegiate athletics was \$58, which

represented 13.1% of total fees. By the time UNCG reached the Division I level in 1991-1992, the athletics fee was \$157 (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, University memorandum, February 16, 1987; 2001).

As the need for more money increased during the Division I years, student athletic fees were increased annually. During the early years of Division I, the increase in fees may not have been surprising as new facilities and increased operating costs needed to be covered. However, the University has not been able to decrease the reliance on student fees to support the athletic department budget. The athletic fee in 2000 was \$300 or 28% of the total student fees which was \$1,062 (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2001). The 2005-2006 athletic fee was \$376 or 26% of the \$1,451 total student fees and the projected 2006-2007 athletic fee is \$403 of the \$1,517 or 26.5% of the total student fee. The athletic fee is considerably the highest fee paid by the students on an annual basis. In 2005-2006, the second highest fee was the \$315 student activities fee (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2006b).

When the plan was put in place to move to Division I, student enrollment in 1985 was 10,382; in 1991, when UNCG officially became Division I, enrollment was 11,648 and in 2005 UNCG had a record enrollment of 15,306 (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2001, 2005a). Therefore, the athletic budget has consistently received more income from the student fees because of the increase in the athletic fee *and* the consistent increase in student enrollment. This suggests that the role of the student has become more important to the athletic programs, not less as administrators originally hoped. Although the percent of the athletic student fee as compared to total tuition and fees has decreased slightly over recent years, the athletic budget has increased due to the large student enrollment increase over the last 15 years.

Much of the burden to support athletics continues to fall on the students, mainly due to the decreased role the alumni and community has played, particularly in recent

years. After the initial fundraising plan, “Division I in ‘91’, the athletic department has not received the necessary funding to support athletic scholarships, particularly as athletic department expenses have continued to rise. The lack of support has slowed the progress of the athletic program considerably.

There was resistance and it was from the faculty and alumni, in particular alum from Woman’s College. The women who graduated and could sense this was a change that this was just another indicator of the change that occurred thirty years ago and essentially they would say we were walking away from Woman’s College. (Subject Dunkirk)

Well and I’m not going to go into any, very much detail, but at that time it was very stressful, a very stressful time in the development office. It got so bad that the alumni association and the administration of the university were writing open letters in the alumni magazine airing their dirty laundry and making their case to all of the alumni. It was messy. And it took several years for that to get resolved, so we were really in the development side just trying to hold the ship together at that point. (Subject Herkimer)

The students’ responses prior to the reclassification allowed the administration to use the students’ response as a catalyst for the move. Surveys suggested that students were excited to not only have “big time athletics” but were willing to pay for it through increased student fees. Once the reclassification began, the students’ role has been and continues to be that of supporter; financially, socially, emotionally, and perhaps how the role is judged most often, physically. The students’ physical presence at games has been a measuring device used by many to indicate that their reaction to athletics is similar to what it was before the move to Division I, indifferent. The students’ lack of change is discussed further in the content section.

*Faculty interaction.*

Throughout the process, the faculty assumed distinct roles. The first position that many faculty held was one of indifference. Overall, most faculty were not fazed by the decisions about the athletic program, or at least did not take a public stance. As one subject stated, “they were rapped up in their own world. They just didn’t have an, or at least, didn’t express their opinion” (Subject Mount).

However, some faculty members took a very active position in the process of reclassification, both in a supportive role to reclassify and as a detractor of the move. A closer examination of the faculty that participated in the reclassification is important, as both sides affected the process. Trelease (2004) wrote that, “many faculty members supported the initiative, but many were opposed – often vehemently (p. 468).

Faculty interaction with athletics was not new at UNCG. In fact, the faculty essentially ran the athletics program, up into the 1980’s when the Chancellor moved it under student affairs. Prior to that, athletics was housed within the school of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992; Trelease, 2004). “There was a part-time athletic director who was also an assistant/associate professor here in the department. So the school, the faculty had a large say in regards to athletics...because it was part of this division” (Subject Syracuse). The faculty role would become smaller once athletics was moved under the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and a full time athletic director was hired in 1983. During the 1980’s and 1990’s, the school would also eliminate the teacher/coach position and establish full time coaches with no classroom teaching responsibilities (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992, University, February 16, 1987).

Faculty that supported the move became part of the “caravan” that had been essentially formed by the civic leaders, the Chancellor, administration, and some alumni. Those faculty members, some of whom were very influential on campus, provided a level of credibility to the move. The number of faculty members that were outwardly supportive of the move was minimal (Trelease, 2004), as many “did not force their opinion to be heard. They just didn’t need the platform” (Subject Albany).

The other portion of faculty that rejected the move believed that this was a move that was not well suited for the UNCG campus (Patterson, 1996; Wineburg, 1996; McMurtrie, 1997). One administrator summed up the faculties’ justification against Division I athletics into three points:

...they were troubled that the University was changing its character and Division I athletics represented a complete transformation, they had academic concerns, and they had apprehension about the athletic budget. (Subject Mount)

The resistance to the move started immediately, with the most memorable disapproval occurring at a faculty senate meeting in November 1986 (Trelease, 2004). One administrator describes the beginning of the resistance:

The faculty brought it up for vote. The straw vote was not for it. It was against. It wasn’t a large majority. In any event – it didn’t come out the way the administration had hoped for. The Faculty Athletics Representative helped smooth the faculty, but by and large, they weren’t buying it...similar to where Jim Ferguson was. (Subject Mount)

The resistance continued for the next eight years until the Chancellor stepped down in 1994.

The faculty confrontation was consistent and made the move to Division I much more complex. The faculty resistance did not lessen because many faculty felt that the administration's rationale for the move was flawed. In a 1997 article one faculty member comments on the administration's reasoning of improving the University using Division I athletics, "It's a faulty argument," says an associate professor, about the administration's belief that it can improve UNCG's profile through athletics. "You don't go to a meat market for flowers, do you? Well, you don't go to an educational institution for sports. In that case, the Ivy League would have the best sports teams" (McMurtrie, 1997, p.C2). The point of the faculty resistance has been if you want to make the academic programs better at UNCG and improve the institution's profile, then you should simply put the resources directly into the academic programs, "not on building Division I sports, parking lots and decks, new offices for the traffic, athletic and recreation staffs, and a pretty water fountain" (Wineburg, 1996, p.C4).

From an administrative point of view, faculty resistance grew more difficult with each step. One administrator stated that dealing with the faculty was "the most difficult part of the process" (Subject Mount). Another administrator suggested that many faculty remained very narrow minded:

They could not think beyond their own world. I remember saying, I understand what you are trying to say but have you considered the following ... have you considered that we're going to have better students? Have you considered the fact that the student-athletes are going to be better students than they were? Have you considered the fact that down the line this might draw some notoriety to the university? (Subject Brunswick)

Another administrator stated that the difficulty was that the faculty were voting no, because,

that is what they do. If most faculty had the opportunity, they would vote not to go to Division I. That's all faculty, not UNCG faculty. Most faculty did not have athletic experience themselves, most have a prejudice against it. (Subject Syracuse)

Some administrators felt that faculty resistance ran deeper than just the reclassification of athletics, but rather a resistance to all the changes on campus. As discussed earlier, the University was changing the mission of the institution from the WC to the doctoral granting state university. Throughout the move, there was a faction of faculty that did not want to see the University change. To them, the move to Division I athletics represented a "big-time" identity, which was not what they wanted.

The faculty role in all of this had very little to do with athletics. It had to do with the campus changing its character. I don't think anyone ever said that, but it was in the air. It was a struggle that was bigger than the athletics issue. (Subject Mount)

The second concern faculty had about the upgrade to Division I was the impact it would have on the integrity of academics. As the transition began to take place, many of the faculty that resisted the move, carried with them the belief that the big time intercollegiate athletics environment had become known for cheating, particularly academic fraud (Trelease, 2004). Faculty had concerns that this move would open up UNCG to problems seen at other Division I institutions. One university that had struggled to keep control of their academic mission at the time of UNCG's transition,

North Carolina State, was being investigated for academic fraud (Golenbeck, 1989; Boeck, 1990). One administrator felt that it wasn't just about what had happened at the other North Carolina state institutions, but rather stereotypical principles about Division I:

The faculty felt that the academic standards of the University might be placed at hazard. Now the faculty didn't know that much about athletics but were working with more stereotypes. But it was a valid concern – I understood it – but it was just exaggerated. (Subject Mount)

Another reason faculty had great concern was the increased financial commitment needed to operate Division I athletics. At the time the move was proposed, the faculty felt the University had financial needs deserving greater priority, in particular basic educational needs such as improved academic buildings and faculty resources as well as student issues, such as the dining halls, library, and dormitories (Trelease, 2004).

The administration was quick to point out that although these concerns were valid, the academic and operational budgets would not be impacted by the athletics transition. The budget to support athletics would come from student fees and donations, and would not involve other budgets. One administrator stated that,

Faculty became concerned about the claim the move was going to have on the University budget. But we had dealt with that in advance. We had largely separated the athletic budget from the academic budget and the state budget. (Subject Mount)

As far as the money was concerned, the Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor had a plan and they stuck to it. Money was not going to be taking away from the academic side of the equation. (Subject Brunswick)

For some faculty, however, it was not the academic concerns, or the change in culture or the financial strain. The problem grew to a deeper level, as some faculty just did not appreciate the handling of major decisions. As the process continued the rift between faculty and administration grew wider, based on what one subject called, “a higher level of suspicion about administrative decisions” (Subject Syracuse).

As the worries for academic integrity lessened, and the financial burden became a smaller issue, and the culture of campus was changing regardless of athletics, the faculty remained angry throughout the 1980’s and into the next decade because of the administration’s decision making process. For many of the faculty it was not the decision itself to move to Division I, but the lack of communication from administration to faculty (Trelease, 2004). Some felt that this change, like many changes, had not been properly communicated to the faculty and this was an issue that many faculty never forgave (Patterson, 1996). As one administrator remembered about the faculty council meeting in November 1986, a day that some subjects felt was a turning point in support of the administration:

And the vote came down and the faculty said, “No, no, we don’t want to do this” and the next day it was announced that we were going to do it. Um, the Chancellor and uh, the Vice Chancellor - *yes*, lots of people, *no*, the motion passes. I mean that’s sort of, - I mean, don’t waste my *time*, I mean, if-if, if you’re not gonna, if you’re not gonna take your *faculty*, don’t call ‘em together to tell you what to *do* about something, if you’ve already decided to do it, I mean that’s fine, go ahead. But, the perception, I think, was that making athletics a big deal was just not a good idea for this, this little women’s, teacher’s college. And they didn’t want to hear that. (Subject Saratoga)

One administrator stated that the situation became very tense with people choosing sides. Some of the battles included the athletics department versus the rest of campus, and the administration against the faculty. One subject stated in a very aggravated voice, “the faculty senate, of course, they were saying we were terrible people, recruiting terrible students. Why are you giving them (athletics) money?” (Subject Altamont)

The role of faculty may not have changed the final outcome of moving to Division I, however, it did impact the process, making it tense, heated, and at times personal, causing people to “square off” and choose sides as one administrator put it (Subject Mount).

In the long run one faculty member felt it may have impacted the Chancellor, the person most responsible for the process.

Tackling so many organizational changes comes at a price. Let me tell ya. That comes with the job. Making the changes initially is tough. But it is in hopes of it being better down the road. Making peace with everyone is not the way to go – there is a judgment that has to be made in terms of the long term interest of the University...that is what the high paid help is supposed to be thinking about. (Subject Mount)

The former Chancellor was one of the most intelligent and marvelous men I have ever worked with in my life. But he was the one who had to take the hits from this change compared to anyone out there. The next woman came in, the first woman to serve as Chancellor at UNC Greensboro. And I think that allowed for some of the alums who might have been resistant to set it aside. Now it was a done deal, but the former Chancellor probably never gets the credit he deserves do the resistance - even though I think it was never at a level of resistance that was extremely strong. (Subject Dunkirk)

### *Content*

The following section looks at the areas that have been impacted by the reclassification of the athletic department to Division I. Areas that data suggest were directly changed due to the reclassification include: the athletic teams, coaches, athletic administration, athletic mission and philosophy, and student-athletes. In addition, data also indicate that there are areas of campus that have changed and some of that change may have been a result of the reclassification. Those areas included: the University's physical appearance, faculty, students, academic programs, external support from alumni and Greensboro community, leadership, the University profile and environment.

Much has changed at UNCG since the mid 1980's, when the decision to reclassify the athletic program became official. Although some may argue that many of the changes took place independently from athletics, those interviewed believed the reclassification to Division I influenced some of the University transition, for better or for worse.

#### *The athletic product*

**Theme: The athletic product, athletic facilities, coaches, athletic administration, student-athletes, and the effort to win were directly impacted by the reclassification of the athletic department.**

First, the athletic product went through the well documented Division III to II to I change, with Division I producing more athletically gifted, but not necessarily more successful, athletic teams. Specifically, the athletes are better than the athletes at

Division III, but the competition at Division I is also much better, making it more difficult to win. As one subject stated,

We are getting better, but all of the schools we play are getting better. We used to dominate in soccer, but look around; other schools are getting stronger at soccer. When we improve in basketball or baseball, so do other schools. It is a constant battle that we have to fight, year in and year out. So we need to continue to improve the teams every year, otherwise we will not be competitive. (Subject Hartwick)

In keeping with the Division I philosophy, UNCG athletic teams are also presented as a form of entertainment. The product itself is sold to the ticket holders, alumni, students, corporations, and the Greensboro community in hopes of generating revenue. In order to help entertain, a cheerleading squad, dance team, and pep band have become additional programs under the intercollegiate athletic budget. An expanded intercollegiate athletic public relations department is responsible for marketing the UNCG teams and to increase exposure through the media (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005c). In addition to creating more exposure for the teams, the University has created better home venues.

#### *The athletic facilities*

Since the process of moving to Division I began, UNCG has built five new on campus facilities in an effort to provide high quality Division I athletic facilities. One administrator discussed the lack of athletic facilities as UNCG moved to Division I:

And we got there, which is amazing to me when I think back on it, with zero facilities. Really. Zero facilities. Yes Fleming is a Division I volleyball facility and it's a Division I wrestling facility. It is not a Division I basketball facility. We had to build the soccer, the tennis courts weren't. We had to play baseball for

the first ten years off of campus. Practice at Grimsley High School and play over in Memorial Stadium. Softball, we had a field. (Subject Brunswick)

The significance of the new stadiums on campus allows coaches to attract better student-athletes to campus. As one coach said after the completion of a new stadium, “The final piece of the puzzle is now in place for us to continue recruiting quality student-athletes to UNC Greensboro who will help us in our quest of winning the Southern Conference championship” (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2007b).

It is important to note that the section only examines the new construction and its initial construction costs and does not address the numerous enhancements completed to the facilities over the last two decades.

1. In 1989, Michael B. Fleming Gymnasium was opened as part of the \$16.2 million Health and Human Performance Building (a building that also houses the athletic offices and academic departments).
2. In 1991, Campus field became the \$3.6 million UNCG Soccer Stadium, still to this day one of the nicest soccer facilities in the country.
3. In 1999, the UNCG Baseball Stadium was opened after much on-campus debate, mainly due to the prime on-campus location and the increase in student fees used to pay for the \$5.4 million dollar stadium.
4. In 2000, the UNCG Tennis Courts were re-built to accommodate the UNCG tennis teams at a cost of \$1.4 million.
5. Finally in 2006, the UNCG Softball Complex was built for \$3 million dollars.

(University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2006)

*The UNCG coaches and athletic administration*

Overall, the athletic department employs over 60 people to administer and coach the Division I athletic teams (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005c), a much larger department than what was here in 1985, which had less than 10 employees (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992). Jobs that were assigned to one employee now need the attention of entire departments. UNCG's Division III program also had coaches as teachers or administrators. One subject suggested that although more work gets done, there were advantages to having employees perform more than one duty.

There was a camaraderie that does not exist like it used to – between teachers and athletes, administrator and student, teacher and administrator. We are just too big, too bureaucratic. I used to be able to do two jobs, officially, many others, unofficially. I just don't have the time to really put on another hat, and say, coach or teach. I miss that. The job doesn't allow for that. You know, I don't think we develop as good of a relationship. (Subject Syracuse)

One area where the changes in the job description lead to a change in personnel was in coaching jobs. Although some of the coaches were able to make the transition from Division III to Division I, the majority of coaches at UNCG have changed. The most cited reason given by the subjects interviewed for the coaching changes were due to the increase in Division I coaching responsibilities. One subject summed up the responsibilities of a coach today:

Recruiting and retaining student-athletes, organizing and controlling a team, as well as scouting, preparing for, and consistently defeating opponents are major responsibilities of Division I coaches. Additionally, having to work as a 24 hours a day, seven days a week guardian makes the job more than just a full-time job. And don't forget...we each needed to win, in some way, shape or form. So, there is a lot of pressure...it is a challenge. (Subject Altamont)

Similar to the coaching responsibilities, athletic administration jobs at the Division I level have become extremely challenging. When UNCG began the reclassification, many administrators also coached. As the administration of the Division I program became a fulltime job, employees were hired specifically to perform the administrative duties, and administrators that were also coaches were asked to make a choice between administration and coaching (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992; 2005c).

Thus, the administrative jobs at UNCG have changed for several reasons: greater expectation of service to the student-athlete, the consistent challenge to administer the auxiliary departments that help create a Division I atmosphere, and lower salaries not matching duties performed. In order to help broaden some of the responsibilities, more administrators and staff have been hired at UNCG with specific responsibilities within the athletic department. This is a significant change from the past when few administrators performed numerous duties.

When this thing first got started we were in the log cabin, about 10 of us, each of us had at least two or three jobs, something like coaching a couple of sports, maybe teaching a class. At that time, we were all so involved. We literally drafted our program from the ground up, we developed our philosophy. So from the beginning I had a great opportunity to become involved. (Subject Altamont)

Ironically, the athletic director has not changed and therefore, much of the same philosophies have remained the same. The athletic director came to UNCG from Cornell in 1983 and brought with him a commitment to the academic integrity of intercollegiate athletics. The athletic director was hired prior to the reclassification, remained

throughout the entire process and remains the head of the department. Subjects suggested that this stabilized leadership may have been a reason for the successful transition.

I think the athletic director has done a *great, great job here*, he and, and everybody *else*, they seem to have this, *like mindset* for making athletics uh, a *part* of the, the *whole*, the whole university experience. (Subject Saratoga)

The athletic director has been so important to the growth in the athletic department. He did not have an easy job. But, he and the Chancellor, they moved us through the process in the best way possible – Division III to Division I in only 5 years...unprecedented. And we have stayed out of trouble, we bring in good kids...he deserves credit for that. (Subject Albany)

#### *The student-athlete*

Next, the student athlete that attends UNCG has changed. First, the athlete has changed as UNCG coaches have moved from not recruiting at all to recruiting nationally and internationally for the best athlete. An examination of the 2005-06 rosters shows student-athletes from over 26 states and 10 countries (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005c). In addition to UNCG putting more of an effort into recruiting across nationally and globally, the ability to do so has been enhanced by scholarship monies being available to cover the added costs of admitting an out of state student versus an in state student.

The student aspect of the student-athlete has also changed, more specifically improved. In the spring of 2006, 52 percent of the UNCG student-athletes had a 3.0 grade point average or better, which represents the highest percentage in one semester achieved (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2006a). Subjects suggested that one of the reasons a better pool of student-athletes are attending UNCG is not only the

ability to provide scholarship money, but the commitment to use the additional funds toward high quality students. One subject explains:

I think that the benefits are the opportunity to award scholarships to student-athletes. People aren't all in favor of that. But, you are rewarding people for work and dedication. And you know, you are still maintaining a philosophy of academics. And I think one of the benefits of Division I is that we can take the money and reward our students. So it's a chance to give scholarships. The better student came out when we moved up because of three things: at Division I you have different academic requirements because as Division I athletes, we were also giving the ability to go out and recruit students that would succeed here, and last and most importantly, we have stayed with the commitment to academics. (Subject Altamont)

One administrator suggested that the ability to recruit has lead to a more diverse and talented pool of student-athletes.

We have better students who are also athletes but there are better students here. Here is an interesting fact. We're a first choice for the African-American population in North Carolina. Not Chapel Hill, not the historically black schools. Now granted if I wanna be an engineer, I'm gonna to go to A&T. But the percentage of minority students on this campus, we actually have more minority students. Obviously that is because we have a better university, but some of the success is because we have a better athletic resources and coaches who go out and recruit good student-athletes, some of whom are minorities. (Subject Brunswick)

Another administrator felt that the NCAA academic requirements and the ability to go out and recruit student-athletes were important, but the most vital aspect to the success of student-athletes today is the importance the administration placed on academics at the beginning stages of the transition. The interviewee stated that the continued improvement in the student-athlete

has long been part of the process. And because we had been steadfast to our commitment to having student-athletes being first and foremost students, we have dispelled many of the problems, or handled or dealt with many of the problems that Division I institutions have relative to you know, “well the athletes are this or the athletes are that”. We have some of that but we don’t have a great deal of it. We have been committed to that since day 1. (Subject Hartwick)

It is important to note that not all student-athletes that are recruited have come to UNCG with high academic credentials. As one subject explained, “are all of our student-athletes 3.0 students? No. But most of them are still good kids, willing to learn (Subject Altamont).

As described in *UNCG’s 2000-2003 Self Study Report*, the intercollegiate athletic program is allowed 10 student-athletes a year who receive special admittance to the University. It states that the intercollegiate athletic program is:

...permitted to use up to ten special “admits” each year. [Under a special “admit” the requirement that a student identified by the program meet the minimum predicted grade point average (PGPA) for admission in that year is waived. (For an explanation of PGPA requirements, see 4.2.1).] The Director of Athletics reviews requests from coaches for special “admits” and requests verification of academic records and “Clearinghouse status” from the Compliance Coordinator. If the Director of Athletics approves the coach’s request, the Compliance Coordinator forwards the special “admit” to the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. Intercollegiate Athletics requires that all special “admits” must meet NCAA bylaw 14.3 requirements. Any appeal of a special admission is sent to the Office of the Provost (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2002).

It should also be noted that the only other program at UNCG that is allowed special admissions is the School of Music.

*The effort to win*

Another aspect that has changed is the commitment to winning. Although interviewees pondered if winning is more important now than at Division III, there seems to be no debating that the *effort* to win at UNCG has increased. As discussed in Chapter 3, the rewards and consequences of winning and losing in college athletics have also become more significant. Based on the continued commitment to Division I athletics (as indicated above in the changes to the athletic product, the increased number of coaches and administrators, the major financial commitment to the athletic facilities, and the effort to attract and retain good student-athletes), the UNCG athletic program has placed a greater emphasis on achieving the rewards of winning and avoiding the consequences of losing at Division I.

Since the move to reclassify, athletic program decisions are made to develop an athletic product that must measure success, on some level, in wins and losses. A philosophy that is clearly different than what was present prior to the 1980's, as one subject stated, "athletics at UNCG was just not a factor. It was not important. Now it is" (Subject Albany).

The University philosophy toward Division I athletics is discussed in the *UNCG Self Study Report 2000-2001*. The report states "Expectation of success does not rest solely in wins or losses but rather is connected to the mission of the University, especially with respect to the academic and personal development of student-athletes. Of foremost concern is the quality of the total experience of the student participant (p. 246). The philosophy suggests that winning games is less of a priority to the student-athlete than achieving a multifaceted collegiate experience, growing athletically, socially, and

academically. However, one administrator is quick to point out that in order to “achieve a high quality experience for the student-athlete, winning games is necessary” (Subject Hartwick). In addition, the pressure to win is not just athletic department driven. Another administrator speaks to the fact that other constituents outside of athletics examine a successful program purely on wins.

Yes. Yes winning is important now. Since we started this move to Division I we have had these expectations...because the expectation is that you’re not creating this kind of program to be anything other than successful. Success in the athletic ventures is in W’s and L’s, more wins than losses. Success in the rest of the department isn’t necessarily measured that way. But to the outside world, people outside of our athletic department, clearly, winning is very important. But where we draw the line is very clear...Winning at the sake or the risk of cannibalizing your student side? No. That is not the expectation at this institution. (Subject Brunswick)

One athletic administrator described the importance of winning now as compared to Division III:

Listen, winning was important at Division III too. I mean, think about how, well, winning was clearly important to the whole process. There is no doubt about that. We aren’t winning at Division III, we are probably not having this conversation. Is it more important now? Well, I don’t think so – I think that it is one of the reasons, one of the characteristics that we have, – we are not all about winning. We have still maintained that student-athlete concept, and that is what the University is committed to. So that is not going to go anywhere. You know is everybody 4.0? No – but nobody is in the country has that. So um – is winning more important than bringing in a decent student? Well, we *have* to win! (Laughter.) But are we bringing in a poor student? No. (Subject Altamont)

Still another administrator described the importance of winning getting more and more significant the deeper the University was into the reclassification process:

If we had not been winning in our Division II years people would have begun to look at it and say “Well golly, if you can’t win at Division II, how can you ever think you’re going to win at Division I?” And the interesting side of that is women’s soccer...we brought the women’s soccer program in while we were at Division II and before we ever stepped foot on the pitch they were ranked in the top 10. We had never even played a game but the expectation was that UNCG has such a stellar men’s program, if they’re going to create women’s soccer, they are going to be good. Imagine being in the top 10 before you ever play a game. Were we expected to win? Of course we were. (Subject Brunswick)

### *Additional changes*

**Theme: The change in the University facilities, faculty, student body, alumni, University profile, and leadership may have been indirectly impacted by the reclassification of the athletic department.**

There is additional content at the UNCG that has changed since 1985, however based on the data gathered, including the interviews, personal observations, articles, and University documentation, not all of the changes can be attributed to the move to Division I. The following section identifies specific areas that data indicate have changed. However the information gathered does not fully support that the change was a direct result of the move to Division I.

All of the changes in the University’s physical appearance, faculty, student body, leadership, alumni, community, and academic programs that occurred during this time period suggest that the reclassification was either directly or indirectly responsible. Much of the data gathered through interviews, archival data, and university documentation suggest the administration believed that the reclassification to Division I was one of the initial changes that created a ripple effect to the other areas. Many subjects concluded that without Division I athletics, the ripple effect may not have

happened and the organizational changes that occurred at the University would not have been as successful or nonexistent.

*Change in facilities.*

Over the last two decades the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has changed considerably. First the appearance of campus has changed to become what one subject stated, “has the look of a major state university” (Subject Albany). Trelease (2004) notes the incredible “physical changes that took place since 1979” when the then Chancellor took over (p. 482). Subjects stated that the reclassification to Division I may have affected the increase in funding used to build the new facilities, as stated previously in the State environment section. One administrator explained his feelings:

Go down Spring Garden, it feels like a Division I campus. You go down College Avenue now, it feels like a Division I campus. It’s like the quad up at Virginia. People that come on to our campus, they have a perception before they’ve ever been on our campus of a regional institution. And then all of a sudden they come on and go “Whoa, wait a minute” - This is a doctoral granting institution. This place has got teeth to it. It’s got solid School of Music, it’s got solid Exercise Sport Science, but it’s also got solid Division I athletics. Look at these facilities. Look at the dorms, the library, the dining halls, the baseball field, the soccer stadium, and then you add the new softball stadium. People are going to say, ‘they’re doing something here pretty well because they look good.’ And you compare those kinds of facilities to where we were in ’85 and it’s a dramatic night and day difference. The bottom line is that bringing Division I athletics to campus made some people who didn’t notice UNCG, take notice. What you see today, on campus, is the result of the right people, in the state, in the city, alumni, starting to take notice. (Subject Brunswick)

Another administrator echoed those comments:

UNC Greensboro campus is flourishing today – just look around you. I would be the first to say I wouldn’t necessarily say it was that one decision to reclassify. It

was many decisions, but among them the decision to move to Division I athletics. (Subject Albany)

Another administrator looked at the University today and wondered what campus would be like if it did not have a Division I athletics program on its campus. The subject felt that the campus would not have the same identity as it does today. He could not determine how much athletics has impacted the University, but felt that there would be a significant change in the University if athletics was not here.

If you stepped on this campus, and there's no athletic presence at all, none. So it's the University of North Carolina Greensboro, and you step on and you see nothing but buildings, no athletic fields and there's no athletic teams. Talk to me about what other school in the United States has that presence – given our size and our mission. How many schools actually have a regional or national presence without athletics? Maybe a handful. (Subject Hartwick)

One faculty/administrator felt that the effect Division I athletics has had on the University can be seen just by examining the facilities. However, the subject stops short of giving credit directly to the reclassification. In fact, the subject was quick to point out that one of the newest facilities, the baseball stadium, was a great source of anger and resentment, not pride. In his tone, the subject seemed to suggest that this was a problem that some had not forgiven.

I have seen what has happened on campus and we have a much more attractive campus, perhaps as a result as the move. We have far better athletics, athletic facilities, which has spilled over to some degree to other campus recreation and intramural programs. Aesthetically, it looks better, even though we don't use the baseball stadium for classes or anything. That is a real problem – that baseball stadium. Maybe not as much today. But, boy when it was built...it was the nicest thing on campus...we had other needs. It is an exclusive piece of property, *but* it

is one of the aesthetic things that has happened on the campus. But, the crime in that stadium, the value is not for all students, only few. (Subject Syracuse)

At the most basic level, many of the administrators interviewed felt that athletics should be given some credit for change in the institution. Physical changes to the campus have gone beyond the new athletic facilities.

Athletics is part of the bigger change. Look at the facilities. We have aesthetically pleasing facilities...there is a physical beauty of campus that our athletic facilities present. It represents a real university. It (the athletic facilities) help complete the picture – we have a beautiful library, state of the art academic buildings, music building. (Subject Mount)

As previously mentioned, the rewarding of the Higher Education Bond in 2000 has allowed much of campus to receive a complete facelift. Outside of athletics facilities, new buildings have been added, refurbished, and have enhanced the entire look of campus, giving a more up-to-date design. Much of the credit has to go in other areas outside of athletics, such as the Chancellor's office and her cabinet, a continued effort in the development office to increase alumni and community donations, and better relations with the University Board of Governors and the State of North Carolina.

*Change in faculty.*

The faculty at UNCG meets the profile of a typical doctoral granting research institution. The profile of the faculty has changed over the last twenty years due to the change in the mission of the University and the increased commitment to research (Trelease, 2004). However, some subjects interviewed suggested that if you believe the University has benefited from the reclassification, and the faculty have made decisions to

come to UNCG based on the improvements, then the enhancement to Division I athletics should be given some credit. There was no additional data that supported this notion. However, subjects pondered the idea that the change in athletics indirectly affected the change in faculty.

We were a Division III mentality on this campus...the physical mentality of the university. I don't think we've ever been by the way or had an academic institution mentality. I think we had stellar faculty. I think that's the one piece, but physically this university was Division III. Financially this university was Division III. But we are starting change...part of that is a Division I thinking. Now we are research driven. You can say whether that's good, bad or indifferent. The fact of the matter is, it brings different people here. And it opens up different perspectives, maybe better. (Subject Brunswick)

I can't *imagine* a faculty member choosing us more positively because we had a good soccer team. Professors, would say, "Well, I want to teach at a well-funded, state university that is, that is, that Carnegie calls a comprehensive research university. ....Whatever those numbers are. They're not going to go, "*ohhh*, what *conference* are they in? (Subject Saratoga)

First, some subjects followed the belief that the reclassification was the first of many significant changes in recent times. In addition, the transition was the most publicized change at UNCG, including the change from the WC to the current association in the University system. Ironically, many subjects suggested that without the change to Division I, many people would not have realized the other changes, particularly the move to a research university within the State system. Without athletics, perhaps attention and additional resources from the external consistencies would not have come at all, and therefore much of what has been accomplished would not have been possible. For example, one subject stated,

If you believe athletics help put us on the map, even if it is just in the state of North Carolina, then you would have to believe it influences much of what you see here today. How much? I don't know. Perhaps without the heavily followed move to Division I, the Graduate School would not have grown because support from the external constituencies, including the state, would never have come to UNCG. And, without the graduate research, talented faculty would have gone elsewhere. (Subject Mount)

The faculty attitude toward athletics seemed to become more positive from some that originally may have been skeptical. One administrator/faculty member stated his feelings about the reclassification:

My own personal feeling was that it was possibly a mistake in going to Division I. I don't feel that way now. I was afraid. It was just awful hard for all of the other universities to draw fans, to succeed in athletics, especially football, basketball. They want to be affiliated with the ACC and your top basketball conference in the country. So there was some real concern. (Subject Syracuse)

Other subjects suggested faculty just decided to drop the fight once athletics completed the move to Division I. One faculty member in 1997 felt that athletics at this point was a "nonissue and stated that few professors ever discuss the sports programs" (McMurtrie, 1997, p.C2), and other professors that resisted the change have retired or accepted employment at other institutions. As younger professors, not tied to UNCG's past, come onto campus, outright hostility by faculty continues to decrease (McMurtrie, 1997).

The University has also done a good job of getting faculty involved in the administration of the athletic department through programs, socials, and most importantly athletic related committees. Administrators point to the fact that the faculty athletics representative (FAR) was held throughout the reclassification by a highly respected faculty member. One administrator stated:

his role in all of this cannot be overstated. He helped smooth out some really rough edges. He helped athletics understand the faculty concerns and vice versa (Subject Albany)

It cannot be stated that all faculty have embraced the change. In fact, a minority of the faculty still voice their displeasure about the overemphasis of athletics and the “misleading” information given to the UNCG constituency about the value of athletics (Subject Whitehall). It appears their battles with athletics seem to be less aggressive and now are “temporary flare-ups” (Subject Brunswick). Which one administrator felt was good. “It is good to have people watching you...keeping you on your toes”(Subject Mount).

Administrators suggest the disagreements are still from a small group of faculty that opposed the idea of change at UNCG. One administrator bluntly stated that, the pullback and the resistance came from faculty who were not ready to see us develop into a major state University. Some still aren't” (Subject Hartwick). Another administrator suggested that the faculty resistance was based on “trying to maintain the quaintness of the University’. And he suggested that “Division I athletics certainly did not represent quaintness” (Subject Albany).

#### *Change in students.*

The students, who were vital to the process, have changed but, outside of the student-athletes, the change can not be directly linked to the reclassification. At the time UNCG athletics was officially moving to and establishing itself in Division I, the UNCG student base had hit all time lows in admission standards. As one subject stated we had “hit rock bottom” (Subject Syracuse). Trelease (2004) wrote that the enrollment decline

was due to numerous administrative problems in admissions, financial aid and the registrar, which led to a frustrated and unhappy student body, some of whom would transfer. During the early and mid 1990's, the University "was battling a perception that it was not a student-friendly campus" (p.463). A few years prior, studies in national demographic data suggested that college enrollment would decrease. Thus, a drop in enrollment at UNCG would lower the University per-student state funding. To address a possible drop in funding, UNCG responded by lowering admissions standards to "unprecedented levels" (p. 479). Subject Syracuse stated:

It had really gotten low and everybody was complaining – I mean all across the campus, all the faculty. They had done this because of the enrollment dips of the 1980's. But the response was not good on campus. We were getting challenging students. But, the faculty didn't know how low it really had gotten. We looked at that and said lets do something. So in the mid to late 1990's we made drastic improvements. We could not do it all at once because we would take too big of an enrollment hit. We just could not stand that financially.

Over the late 1990's UNCG made drastic improvements in admitting, retaining and graduating students with better academic credentials (Trelease, 2004). Much of the recognition to the changes in the student population therefore deserves to go to those who worked to attract a stronger student base, namely the admissions department. However, the UNCG admissions department conducted several studies in the late 1970's and early to mid 1980's that suggested students would be more apt to attend UNCG if in fact a Division I program became a reality (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992). Therefore, once again, it can be argued that some credit has to be given to the reclassification if it is an attraction to students.

Because we're a more mature university, we're able to attract a better looking student. Because we're a more mature athletics program, we're able to attract a more mature athlete. The combination of that person has to be a student and an athlete. We've had some just marvelous folks come through the program in both a national and international flavor. Internationally we're really recognized in some of our sports. Men's and women's soccer is known around the world and when people, when you say that, that is not a gloss over. That is a true statement. Known around the world, people know that UNCG plays soccer at a high level. (Subject Brunswick)

And so the overall student body over the last 10 to 15 years – well, we noticed a difference. But to try and isolate it to *just* athletes I think is tough. There are so many people that worked hard, from the Chancellor down, to make this a stronger academic institution and change the student body. You have to include the people in our athletic department for some of the change too. I think our coaches and administrators have really been good. I credit the athletic director for setting the standard and recruiting students who could compete academically. We are not going to have a bunch of special admits. I think that is a pretty healthy change – we have good students... You know, I see students choosing this University as their first choice, rather than a back-up. They didn't get into Carolina, App St. – you know those numbers have been improving. I think athletics used to be a disability, the look of campus used to be a disability in so many different ways. I would guess athletics has contributed to that, but to what extent, I have no idea how much. I don't know how to measure that. (Subject Syracuse)

So, athletics was part of this movement, a movement in the right direction. Athletics was the most prominent move made. Now let's say we didn't go through all of this change, well, we wouldn't be having all time highs in enrollment with all time highs in academics side of enrollment. We wouldn't be Fulbright's. You know - we're going to have more Fulbright's this year than we've probably had in the last four, five, seven, ten years put together. Now does athletics have anything to do with that, eh probably not, but a real quality view of UNCG from the outside looking in might entice *somebody* to look a little further. So maybe athletics is responsible for some of the success. (Subject Brunswick)

The most damaging evidence to this theory is that unfortunately what has not changed is the student's apathy toward athletics. If athletics was influential to a student's college choice, as administrators suggested during the reclassification process, then an

assumption could be made that once on campus, students would become heavily involved in athletic events. This has not happened. When discussing the students at UNCG throughout the process, the feeling is that overall, the students, did not change the opinion of athletics – they remain uninterested (Atkinson, 1994, 1996, 1998; Cross, 1999; McMurtrie, 1997; Withers, 2004). In fact, subjects interviewed stated numerous times that one of the biggest disappointments in the entire process is that students are still very apathetic toward UNCG athletics.

I mean if the students were drawn here because of the presence of athletic *programs*, why do we only, you know, why do we have a stadium, a soccer stadium that's never been full even when Notre Dame came and played here years ago. Uh, why?...our men's soccer team was ranked Number 1 in the nation- we couldn't, we couldn't *drag* people to come see us. There are reasons, and many of them are probably *good* reasons, to come to *UNCG*, but I can't imagine that *consciously* the chance to see Southern Conference *athletics* is in anyone's thinking...students don't care, they just don't care. There are several issues - there's a gender question, uh, there's a where do they live question, there's a how much do they want to go home on the weekends question, there's, I mean there's a number of questions about the kids who come to UNCG, not to judge them in any dimension at all, but, they like to go home, freshmen like to go home and see their friends back in, back in *Jacksonville*, uh, *Asheville*, *Brashboro*, *Montreboro*, *wherever it is*, they want to go back and hang out with their friends. And many kids go home most weekends. *Or* they live off-campus, or they have other things to do... I mean I guess I can understand that institutional argument. Division I athletics should generate interest like it would at other schools. But, on the other hand, you know, if you were to go up to, *20* or whatever number students, and ask them how many sporting events they've been to this year, I would guess that over half of them, maybe *2/3rds* of them would say *2 or less*, even though they're paying *hundreds* of dollars in student fees. (Subject Saratoga)

Students care about athletics – well I am not sure.... Maybe it is one of those things that if we didn't have, everyone would want...you know. Look at football, we don't have it and it seems that we now have more students asking for football. (Subject Syracuse)

A review of articles addressing the lack of student support since UNCG became Division I indicates that this is not a recent problem. In 1994, the men's basketball coach openly questioned the support of the student body, and blamed students' lack of attendance at home games as the main reason they were losing top recruits. The coach states:

I'm very disappointed in our students. I want our students to come out and have some fun and get into it. We've got 12,000 students and we can only fill up one side. The only way we are going to build our program to a higher level is to present an environment that is attractive to recruits. We lost a kid to East Tennessee State. What was his reason? He loved this school. He loved the academics. He loved our program. He loved everything about it. He went up (to Johnson City) on the first day of practice - Midnight Madness - and they had 6,000 people there. He chose (ETSU) because of the atmosphere there (Atkinson, 1994, p. C2).

The 1994 article also pointed to the fact that UNCG with a student enrollment over 12,000 could not draw 1,300 fans to a game, yet, their cross-town rival North Carolina A&T, also Division I, had a much lower student enrollment of 7,850 and their attendance was just under 6,000 (Atkinson, 1994).

Men's and women's soccer were sports that administrators hoped would also generate student enthusiasm; however, student support has been missing despite the men's soccer program consistently winning. In 1996, after UNCG men's soccer had gone 20-1 and were ranked second nationally and the women's soccer team had won 16 games and were ranked 15<sup>th</sup> nationally, students still did not take interest. In their first year of Division I soccer, UNCG opened a premier soccer-only facility and began charging admission. Men's soccer attendance has dropped each year from 1991 to 1996,

where it has leveled at approximately 1,000 fans per year. The women's soccer program has not average 500 fans since its inception. Again, coaches have pointed to the students as an area of concern: "I'm not sure what's behind it," stated the UNCG men's soccer coach. "It's certainly not from lack of productivity. The programs here are as good as any on the Division-I level. I'm obviously disappointed" (Atkinson, 1996, p. C1; Kimmel, 2005b).

Two years later, the men's soccer coach issued a similar statement in another *News & Record* article addressing lack of student attendance. "What's discouraging is the lack of support from the students. It makes me pull my hair out. I don't know what we can do about that." Interestingly, the athletic programs in the late 1990's had a run of success as both soccer programs, men's and women's basketball, and baseball had made postseason appearances. However, students were still not impressed by the athletic success. One student stated, "We're not known for our sports here. I mean, it's great that we have sports, but there doesn't seem to be a point. We have a great art department here, and we have a great education department. I'm not sure where sports fit in" (Atkinson, 1998, p.C1). Finally, when UNCG men's soccer made it to number one in the country, a *Greensboro News & Record* article wrote that the, "achievements haven't quite captured the attention of many UNCG students" (Withers, 2004, p. C1).

#### *Change in alumni.*

Apathy toward UNCG athletics also continues and in many cases grows deeper when students become alumni. Generally, the alumni, as well as the Greensboro community, have not rallied around the Division I program. Outside of moments such

as the 1997 and 1998 Women's Soccer Championships in which UNCG hosted and ESPN televised, and the 1996 and 2001 NCAA men's basketball tournament appearances, there have been few teams or sporting events that the alumni and the city can rally around. In fact, an examination of two key facts: the number of fans at home games and the donations to the Spartan Club suggest that the public attention and support that UNCG was hoping for has yet to come (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2007a).

Two significant results of the continued apathy from the community and alumni has meant that the students have had to maintain a high athletics student fee due to the low revenue generated from a small fan base and a lack of financial contributions to the athletics fund. Additionally, the lack of support from the alumni and community remains a point of emphasis to those that felt Division I athletics would not work. Administrators commented on this situation:

We continue to put a burden on the student relative to the student fee. Why? I think we over estimated how the general, how quickly the general public would buy into being Spartan fans. That has certainly hurt our growth. (Subject Brunswick)

But then again, there may be a lot of people who would ask are we a success when we only draw several hundred people to a soccer game on average. I think there are a lot of people who see this and think Division I isn't working, at least not yet. The reality is that you can not rely totally for very long on student fees. That is getting to become an unbelievable burden because tuition is going up. It is going up at an astronomical rate here. So you definitely have to have that community support behind you. (Subject Syracuse)

Greensboro's goal of going Division I using fundraising as a way to generate a significant amount of money was at the time an overly optimistic goal. Still funds were raised but never at the level they thought they could. (Subject Mount)  
 In particular in terms of the fund-raising abilities of this institution, which it is their job to sell the idea of Division I – whatever that means! That has not kept pace with the administration side of the process. Bottom line – the fundraising has not been successful (Subject Hartwick)

One subject provided deeper thought to why the community and alumni have lacked interest:

And all through, you know at, all through the years, since we moved to Division I, you would see pretty much the same people at the games. I think there was a disappointment because when people think of Division I in the abstract, they don't think of the Big South Conference they think of the ACC. And so when we get there, first of all we get to Division I and we can't join a conference for several years, and then when we join it's the Big South and we are competing against Radford, and Coastal Carolina, and UMBC and schools like that. That is, turns disappointing and its hard to get excited about that, especially in ACC country. And there's such a close correlation between success on the playing fields and success on the fundraising side. We have been pretty successful in soccer over time but that's not, you know it really was *basketball* – that's where we needed to make it and we just, we weren't able to sustain that and I think that in the consequence um, we didn't have any good natural rivalries. I think that would have helped a lot in terms of developing alumni and local pride. (Subject Herkimer)

*Change in University profile.*

Administrators acknowledge that fan support and athletic fundraising has not met their expectations, however, many subjects were quick to point out that success of moving to Division I is not just about counting the number of tickets sold or money given. Interviewees pointed to an overall transformation of the University's profile, and mentioned specifically the expansion of the University, the improvement in the academic programs, and the change in the campus environment.

It's always called guilt by association; there is the positive side of association. The fact that we interact with the Furman's and the Wofford's and the Elon's and the Davidson's and a Western Carolina and an Appalachian ... that doesn't hurt us. College of Charleston, good interaction. Our profile – you know 'who we are' improves because of this guilt by association. Then think about that our games outside of the conference. In basketball we play major state universities from across the country – just in recent years we have played Indiana and Maryland and Kansas and Missouri. We play against the upper echelon, Duke, Villanova, I mean – that is good recognition. In baseball we beat Chapel Hill. There is nothing wrong with that at all. It's all good recognition. (Subject Brunswick)

Is the success from being in a conference with like-minded institutions, one that you are proud to be associated with and that it is a program that graduates it athletes; and it is proud of their athletes. Not be on the front page because of some scandals. (Subject Syracuse)

One administrator spoke with enthusiasm when discussing the 1997 men's soccer championships which were hosted at UNCG and televised on ESPN. He started the quote by mimicking a sports commentator:

Live from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in Greensboro, North Carolina the Division I National Championships.” That was great - that is exactly what everyone bought into. Because you can't put a value on, there is no way we can tell you how much value the university got from that. Or when the men's team makes it into the NCAA men's basketball tournament and we go out and play Stanford on CBS. Or we played Cincinnati on CBS – and we almost beat them. That is recognition that in my mind improves the profile of the University. (Subject Brunswick)

Administrators felt that an improvement to the University profile would develop all areas of the University, most importantly the academic programs. The Chancellor in the 1980's wanted to make a stronger commitment to the University mission that was established when UNCG became part of the University system. This meant the continued

development of strong undergrads and establishing a renewed dedication to the graduate program.

We tried to make the case that there would be a lot of academic benefits from a good athletic program. Athletics was the first of many changes that were going to be made. It was in substance a good case – the fact is that successful programs bring awareness to the University...other aspects of the University. (Subject Mount)

Well, I'm going to tell you we are [intercollegiate athletics department] going to take our fair share of credit for the fact that we are a far more viable institution. We're certainly going to take our fair share, whatever it is, I don't even care if it's two percent, but it's more than that by the way, that we have a better student population, that we're more competitive, I don't mean athletically, more competitive for quality students, more competitive for quality faculty. We look and feel like a Division 1 institution. Forget athletics, we look and feel like a Division I institution, whatever that means in the United States, we look and feel like it. Because of that we have become an institution of choice where we weren't. I think there was, I think that we were a positive factor in the growth of this and the way we are perceived. (Subject Brunswick)

...and the community the business community wanted UNC-Greensboro to be a much more serious player on the stage in North Carolina. More programs in the sciences as well, coupled with that there was this desire to move this university ahead in its visibility and it was determined that Division I athletics would be a way of doing that, which would also help us some with male enrollment. And so it seemed that we would move the university ahead and really allow it to fully develop in its role that was assigned to it in 1963. The full doctoral program and other university things – student life, alumni relations – things had to happen on many fronts and athletics was seen as a way to do make things happen. If one would look at Greensboro and that campus in 1990, prior to moving to Division I, and the resources they had in 1990 and the resources they have received around the year 2000 and beyond it is such a stark contrast. Now, whether or not this would be the case...I would say this is not just due to Division I athletics, but it may have played some role in it. Much of what happened, much of the resources and the gain of resources came through the bonds that were passed in the late 1990's and through the former Chancellor's persistence in pushing on those buttons about the under funding of UNC Greensboro. There was a fundamental problem since the 1960's. So athletics was probably helpful, but I would say

more in the kind of mindset people have about Greensboro...I think that is where you have more of a direct cause and relationship there. (Subject Dunkirk)

The extent, the intensity, the depth of the graduate programs has a lot to say about what kind of campus you are going to be. The bottom line is we were not where we needed to be in the late 1970's. (Subject Mount)

Subjects interviewed did agree that the University environment has changed since UNCG committed to a Division I athletics program. Statements made by administration indicate that the University has in fact moved from the identity of the WC, a single-sex liberal arts school of the 1950 and 1960's, to a university with characteristics that match a major research state university. This environment, which administrators were seeking in the early 1980's, included a Division I athletics program:

We had to move to DI. If we stayed at DIII, it would have been TOTALLY out of character with the changes that had begun in the 1960's...totally out of character. Honestly, someone else, later on, would have had to do what we were doing – that is it had to come. And the question was when? My own view was NOW. If we wanted to be a major state university, we needed to be DI. It is so intertwined. (Subject Mount)

I will tell you that it was a fundamental piece that the former Chancellor and his, his uh Vice Chancellors figured had to be in place to begin the other changes. The athletics move was the most public change...we were at a crossroads. When I look back at it, we were at a crossroads of the faculty that didn't want to give up the 'quaintness' if you will, of the environment and, or a greater feel or what we could be. If you walk across the campus today, and everybody says this to me: 'Wow. We're on a, we're on a university's campus. The dynamic change of the university can either be dynamically going the wrong direction or dynamically going the right direction. Well we're dynamically going the right direction. Has athletics been a part of that? Well, would athletics have been the negative side of it if we weren't increasing enrollment, if we weren't as good of students. Because the Chancellor and the trustees said, 'There will be better quality of life, there will be a better student life experience on the campus, we will do things that would encourage brighter and better students to come. (Subject Brunswick)

The other issue was the planning of the university. For the university to be attractive to students, in that part of time in the early 80's, we felt that we were losing students to Appalachian, to Wilmington, to ECU. We weren't attracting the quality students. The movement to move to Division I was part of a master plan with the university to increase its size, and to enhance student life. (Subject Altamont)

*Change in leadership.*

Leadership of the University changed shortly after the move to Division I, particularly at the highest level. Some believe that much of the administrative change was due to the reclassification to Division I athletics. As one administrator/faculty stated, "it was the final straw for many". Those constituents that disagreed with the Chancellor about the move to Division I felt that this was another decision in a long line of university changes in which the administration followed their own agenda. As one interviewee stated "Essentially, the administration had their mind made up. The fact that they (administration) acted as though we have a voice really irritated many people. But, this was not the first time faculty felt they were not being heard."

Trelease (2004) described the former Chancellor's administration as one that created controversy, "while pursuing the same research-university agenda that had animated the Ferguson administration." In comparison to the other controversies in the former Chancellor's administration, the reclassification was paramount. "No controversy equaled that over intercollegiate athletics – specifically athletic scholarships and the move to NCAA Division I" (p,467).

Trelease (2004) goes on to state that the Chancellor "was blamed, sometimes fairly and sometimes not, for bureaucratic growth, perpetual self-study, slow decision-

making, tolerating for too long truly unpopular administrators, subordinating all priorities to the financial bottom line, and for not listening to opinions at variance with his” (p.467). One of the most apparent problems was that the Chancellor and his administration had given too much attention to the business community and ignored other constituencies, perhaps the most important being the faculty.

It was not just by coincidence that at the same time athletics was moving to Division I, faculty had reported suffering from “low morale”. The move to Division I in 1991 came at the end of a very frustrating transition in which the administration was determined to put the University into its rightful place in the University system. Athletics was not the only problem between faculty and administration but rather one of many. Low faculty morale had been building before the 1980’s and had been a combination of “inadequate funding, lower admission standards, perpetual self-study, an entrepreneurial atmosphere fostered by the growing bureaucracy, and the athletics issue” (Trelease, 2004, p.476).

However, as time has gone by, many interviewed reflected on the former Chancellor’s leadership as something that had to be done. Some subjects were still confused about how to describe the former Chancellor’s role as beneficial or harmful to the University:

There were not good relations and really not a lot of respect. Many faculty didn’t like the things he was trying to do here. Let’s be honest, he had to lift the whole ship. Things were neglected here for a long time. But, he also played things close to the vest. There were not – and eventually this would do him in the early 90’s – good lines of communication. Faculty senate, in particular a few people really began to raise some, um, objections to things. And he was not really good

for faculty moral. They thought too many decisions were being made without consulting faculty at all. (Subject Syracuse)

Some administrators described the change in leadership as necessary. Due to the numerous changes that needed to be made in a short amount of time, someone had to come in and sacrifice for the good of the cause. Some subjects felt that this was in fact the case at UNCG. One subject stated, “the former Chancellor’s job was to come in and move the campus in this direction, not to make friends...he displayed a tremendous amount of courage” (Subject Dunkirk).

The transition was going to be comprehensive. That feeling for what was coming was disturbing to many. And it had very little to do with athletics, but it had to do with the campus changing its character. Someone had to come in and lead that charge...in a sense someone had to be the bad guy. (Subject Albany)

The Chancellor tried to make the case...Look at our state, we have no newspapers continuously reporting on academic program advancement. He wanted to get the University better known – both inside the state and out. This was a part of growing up. But I don’t think he was too successful. Funny, I think more people today would agree that it is the case. The reality was, and still is, we had to become more aggressive in selling the whole package of the institution. (Subject Mount)

The new Chancellor came to UNCG in 1995 and as described in the context section walked into a campus that had started to take shape but still had not found its identity. The foundation of the academic programs, including the graduate program, athletics, alumni and community relations had been laid by the previous administration. However, many subjects felt that the previous administration had advanced without paying enough attention to a choice few constituents, namely the business community,

and had largely ignored the input of other groups. The current Chancellor's regime has been quite different, mainly due to the increased communication between the various parties. Interviewees described the current change as "refreshing", and "much needed". Faculty, in particular, felt more confident in the current leadership (Trelease, 2004):

Between she and the Provost, they just work really well together. Faculty trust them; trust their judgment and maybe that is because they consult. They try as much as possible to involve faculty early on about coming to discussions on things. And it is not that they always are able to do what those faculty want them to do, but at least they were included. And that has made a huge, huge difference. (Subject Syracuse)

In addition to improving relations with faculty, the Chancellor has developed strong relations with the external community, specifically alumni, the Greensboro community, and the state legislature. The results of these cultivated relationships have been increased financial support, as shown by the most recent capital campaign, *Students First*.

The Chancellor had a lot to do with this. I mean she was the right person at the right time. She knows how to appeal to the older WC alumnae. She knows how to create a sense of pride that this is their university. I think people have so much respect for what she did and the direction that she led the university. I think *that* attracted support to the university. (Subject Herkimer)

We have in this campaign now and alumni are coming out of the woodwork that we had never had relationships with. Why? Well because they always acknowledged they had a great education but they couldn't acknowledge the outward appearance of the university because nobody knew about it. We are helping them identify with a new UNCG. The Chancellor has done a great job with building those new relationships. Part of that does go back to the athletic side of all of this. We are an identity that alumni can grab onto. (Subject Brunswick)

An example of the Chancellor's commitment to reestablish relationships between the University and the WC alumnae is the *Students First Campaign's* "largest gift to date – and the largest ever from an alumna – a \$4 million commitment from a 1950 graduate" (Gilliam, 2006).

Another subject provided kudos to the Chancellor for her ability to attract more attention and gain more funding from the state:

The Chancellor lead the charge for the \$3.1 billion physical changes, the capital changes, the campaign for UNCG, got us the science building and the new buildings here on campus. The reason why I say that is because you cant ignore the work that is going on now... And then enter this creative idea of a bond which, that was the Chancellor. And the spin off is what I would call the physical side of what the University now presents. What were we going to be, a research, high research oriented institution. All the work of the past coming to reality today! (Subject Brunswick)

The Chancellor herself stated,

We are on the cusp of becoming a truly great university and must build the foundation for this move with the Students First Campaign. Our vision for the future of UNCG is to be a leading, diverse, student-centered research university that is a university of first-choice for undergraduates and graduate students. As we continuously move forward toward this goal, we become, more and more, a powerful advocate and resource for the people of North Carolina. (Gilliam, 2006)

Although subjects respected the job done by the current administration, some felt that credit needs to be given to other administrators, particularly those that saw the university through the difficult part of the University transformation, as well as the athletic reclassification.

People are coming to the University now that have been cultivated for years. Some of those people, well to be perfectly honest, the move to Division I was what hooked them on the University years ago. In fact athletics brought many of those players to the university and now they're in other areas of the university. And that's fine, I don't disagree with that, but we got backhanded a little bit. You know people like to take shots at athletics, you know we don't draw fans, we don't do that...but you know what we did do – we opened up a lot of doors. (Subject Brunswick)

It had to do about quality of life at the university. So today when we're a stronger university people say "Well isn't this marvelous we're at 18,000". These folks wanted to be at 15,000 right now. They were great visionaries, they were really great visionaries. (Subject Hartwick)

### *Summary of UNCG*

Since UNCG became part of the University system in 1963, it has struggled to develop an identity as a co-educational, research focused, state university. In an effort to bring attention to UNCG's new institutional profile and to create an atmosphere similar to other North Carolina state schools, the administration decided to move the intercollegiate athletics program from Division III to Division I.

In the fall of 1986, UNCG's athletic programs began the five year plan to move to Division I. The controversial move to Division I was completed in 1991 and more than 15 years later still remains a debatable decision. Administrators interviewed believed that the reclassification would benefit the overall profile of UNCG. Thus, subjects have justified the move by measuring success differently than winning percentage, attendance figures, and donations. Rather some have measured success of the reclassification based on the other enhancements that have been made at the University since the reclassification. Interviewees felt that athletics was the first step in many that allowed the

University to become what it is today. Subjects mentioned areas such as the improved university profile, the success of the graduate program, the improved quality of student life, the aesthetic beauty of campus, as well as improvements in the athletic program, such as better student-athletes, facilities and coaches as either direct or indirect results of the reclassification.

Subjects summed up the reclassification with the following quotes:

Absolutely, we did the right thing and here's why. If we didn't do it then, we would have been doing it now – maybe sooner. Look around, Winston-Salem State is going to Division I. North Carolina Central is going to Division I. There are two Division II schools in the state system that are going to Division I. Well how much longer will it be before Elizabeth City State because where are they going to play? Since 1991, look at all the other schools that have moved – we should have done it sooner. (Subject Brunswick)

It's weird, I think back to this one time...This was the year after we had, it was like '97, we had gone to the, we had gone and played Cincinnati very closely in the NAAs [men's basketball tournament] the year before...lost by 4 or 5 – we were a 15 seed, I think. So the next year, we were playing for the conference championship, and we couldn't fill this gym. If you go back and look at the statistics for uh, basketball attendance...well at one point, we were running in the lower 1/3 of the Southern Conference....despite, *despite* being one of the largest universities- I mean, Wofford, you can put the Wofford student body in this *room and they draw as much as we do!* So, I am not sure if this is really working from a campus atmosphere point of view...You know, I am a fan, but I just don't know. (Subject Saratoga)

And I think the athletic director did one hell of a job of conducting that. And even the Chancellor did a hell of a job. There were a lot of people, a lot of boosters that spent a lot of time getting involved in this. All the people that were involved – I think this is a positive! But, don't get me wrong. This is not an A. There is a pitfall in Division I...believing that Division I makes you something that you are not. Division I is more than just the athletics department. (Subject Hartwick)

### Elon University

Similar to UNCG, Elon University's transformation to Division I was examined using the contextualist approach. This approach allows the athletic change at Elon to be analyzed over time, in terms of linkages between the content of change and its context and process (Pettigrew, 1987). Unlike UNCG, whose transition had clear time points, (before, during, and after the transition), Elon's time points and themes (Table 3) were separated by just two time points (prior and since the move to Division I).

Table 3: Elon University - Summary of Themes

<b>Context</b>	
<i>Category</i>	<i>Theme</i>
From Elon College to Elon University	The move to Division I was part of a larger, more comprehensive strategic change that began in the mid 1980's and is still ongoing at Elon University.  The decision to move to Division I was greatly impacted by the need for the University to improve its academic status by being accepted into memberships and associations that are selective; one of those memberships is a Division I athletic program.
Elon Athletics: From NAIA to Division I	A long established tradition of athletic participation and past intercollegiate success at Elon influenced the decision to move to Division I.
Higher education environment – the private schools	Because of private institutions' decreasing enrollment patterns of the 1950's, 60's and 70's, as well as the demographics indicating that during the 1980's the enrollment numbers would continue to drop, Elon responded to the fiercely competitive environment by improving the quality of their students' collegiate experience, while staying just below their peers' tuition price. As part of the improvement to student life would be an upgrade in the athletic program.
College athletics environment	Many higher education institutions place heavy emphasis on intercollegiate athletics in hopes of

	gaining public recognition.
<b>Process</b>	
<i>Category</i>	<i>Theme</i>
The reclassification to Division I	The decisions throughout the process of moving to Division I were vital to the long term success of the athletic program.  Attaining conference affiliation in the Southern Conference was the most important aspect of the move to Division I.
Constituency Role in the Process	Faculty acceptance, alumni support, and the influence of the Elon leadership throughout the process were essential to the fluidity of the process of moving to Division I.
<b>Content</b>	
<i>Category</i>	<i>Theme</i>
The change of the institution	The University and its constituency changed considerably over the last two decades. However, nearly all of the changes on campus, including changes to many of the constituency groups, are a result of the strategic change to improve the institution's profile over the last two decades.
The change in the student body	The student body may have been indirectly impacted by the reclassification of the athletic department.
The change in alumni	The alumni have become more active in their support of Elon, however it was difficult to determine how much of the change was due to the reclassification of athletics to Division I.
The change in faculty	The faculty have changed at Elon, however, the change was not a result of the reclassification to Division I.
The importance of winning	The importance of winning in athletic competition may not have changed since the reclassification to Division I.
The change in institutional philosophy	The overall institutional philosophy, as well as the philosophy toward athletics, may have changed; however the depth of the change was difficult to determine.
The athletic product	The athletic product, as well as the student-athlete, the coaches, the mascot, improved peer associations, and the facilities were directly impacted by the reclassification of the athletic department.

Administrators indicated that when the school was moving from NAIA to the NCAA Division II level, there was no immediate declaration that a move to Division I was imminent, although some did feel that it was inevitable. Additionally, because the athletic transition essentially started (the move from NAIA to Division II in 1993), stopped in Division II, and then started again in 1997, subjects felt that the time during the transition (1993-1996, which was the time spent in Division II) did not create much attention or change. As one subject stated, “the real change wasn’t from NAIA to Division II, it was when we moved to Division I” (Subject Tower). Therefore, when discussing the context, the sections have been broken into two separate time points: prior to the move to Division I (1996 and earlier) and then since the move to Division I (1997-present).

Although the themes identified can easily be interchanged among the three areas of Pettigrew’s contextualist approach (process, content, and context), this first section, context, provides vital information specific to the internal and external environment in which Elon reclassified their athletic programs. The following section on the history of Elon University provides the reader with detailed information about the change in context prompted by the transformation of Elon from a college described as a “small, unattractive, parochial bottom feeder” (Keller, 2004, p. 4) to a nationally recognized, medium sized university (U.S. News & World Report, 2006).

### *Context*

The context section refers to the conditions of change, both the internal structure and the broad features of the outer context from which much of the legitimacy for change

is derived (Pettigrew, 1987). This section examines the history of Elon University, including an examination of the cultural, social and political environment on campus throughout the reclassification. Additionally, the context section examines the external environment that impacted the change to Division I at Elon. This section is examines the following internal context categories: a brief examination of the history of Elon University, the history of the athletic program; as well as examining two external environments that impacted the move to Division I: the higher education environment, and the college athletic environment.

*From Elon College to Elon University*

**Theme: The move to Division I was part of a larger, more comprehensive strategic change that began in the mid 1980's and is still ongoing at Elon University.**

**Theme: The decision to move to Division I was greatly impacted by the need for the University to improve its academic status by being accepted into memberships and associations that are selective; one of those memberships is a Division I athletic program.**

*Prior to the reclassification to Division I.*

In order to fully understand the personality of current day Elon University, it is important to provide a brief history, because as one subject stated, “it shows that, from the beginning, we have kept the spirit and persistence of Elon’s founders alive” (Subject Frank).

Elon College was founded by the Christian Church in 1889, on the principles of the United Church of Christ teachings, as a nonsectarian, coeducational school “to

advance learning, as well as Christian morality, among its students and to prepare ministerial aspirants for their lifework” (Stokes, 1982, p.3; Keller, 2004). The first class had 76 students, two incomplete buildings, much debt, and a handful of professors lead by William Long, founder and first president (Elon University, 2006).

Since the beginning, Elon made strong efforts to maintain a commitment to a liberal arts program filled with courses in philosophy, languages, arts, music, and history. Administration however did not forget the practical side of education as they quickly added business and law related courses. Based on the belief that education was for all, Elon also established a welcoming environment for female students. In 1892, Miss Irene Johnson was the first female to graduate from Elon and was immediately hired as the assistant professor of mathematics (Stokes, 1982).

Over the next 30 years, Elon began to establish itself as a worthy private institute as it received financial support from the Christian church, its faithful membership, and well organized and loyal alumni. Perhaps the most significant financial assistance came in 1895, as the College received a \$20,000 loan from the Farmers Bank of Nansmond. This money allowed Elon to pay of much of its original debt and, for the first time, begin modest plans for the future. However, even with the financial contributions, Elon was still not financially sound as the 20<sup>th</sup> Century began. Because of this, construction growth, increases in salaries, and other operational necessities were largely ignored (Stokes, 1982).

In 1905 under new President Moffitt, a second loan of \$35,000 was given to the College by the Farmers Bank of Nansmond which was used to build and improve

dormitories on campus. This, along with other sources of financial assistance, allowed the campus and enrollment to grow steadily until two altering events impacted the future success of the small college (Stokes, 1982).

The first event not only impacted Elon but higher education institutions nationwide as males enlisted to fight in World War I. “When the United States declared war against Germany on April 6, 1917, the day was hailed as memorable at Elon College” (Stokes, 1982, p. 184). Over the next several years, Elon’s curriculum would change as the College made a commitment to work with the government to house and train officers, which drastically impacted the student population. In addition, the student body, both the males and females, adopted a “College War Creed” and pledged to do their part to serve their country (p.167). Although the 1918 senior class dropped from 46 to 30, as many left to serve in the War, Elon also had many new students enroll as the College worked with the Federal government to establish a soldier training program known as the Students Army Training Corps (SATC). The Corps increased attention to the small college as 112 men enlisted into the training, with many more in waiting (Stokes, 1982).

As the war ended, many students that served overseas came back to Elon, older and ready to succeed on their own. In addition, many that were enlisted in the SATC stayed and finished their degree. On-campus changes as a result of the war were twofold: first, the enrollment numbers increased and second, Elon was left with a much more mature student body. Because of a wiser student population, the administration began to lessen their control over the students, and more power was assigned to student run

organizations. Student involvement in the government of the university has since grown and remains a vital part of today's campus (Stokes, 1982; Keller, 2004).

Five years later a fire destroyed the Main building, which as its name would indicate, represented the heart of campus. Many thought the fire would end the College's existence. Stokes (1982) lists the number of newspapers throughout the state that pleaded for their community to help rebuild the school. The *Burlington Daily News*, the *Greensboro Daily News*, and the *Raleigh News and Observer* appealed to their readers to aid in the rebuilding of the wounded institution. The response was phenomenal and gave the Board of Trustees hope that not only was recovery possible, but in fact, "it was decided that a mere replacing of the building which had been destroyed would not answer the present need at all" (p.208). The new plan would call for multiple buildings constructed and financed by raising well over \$300,000. The plan resulted in five new buildings and a forever changed campus. However, it would soon be realized that the building and operational costs associated with the new campus would exceed \$600,000 to build, and not the original \$300,000 as originally thought. This, among other things, would force Elon into debt; a problem Elon would not soon escape (Stokes, 1982).

In 1931, Dr. Leon Smith became president at Elon and immediately walked into a very difficult situation. During his first ten years, Dr. Smith dealt with a decreasing enrollment, unhappy faculty, the Great Depression, and the start of World War II. All of these issues forced Elon into difficult financial times, even to the point where the administration was unsure it would remain open (Keller, 2004).

Due to the lack of stability, the Board of Trustees on December 9, 1931, gave complete authority to Dr. Smith to, “take all steps necessary in his judgment and discretion in the matter of the management of the College...to make such arrangements as in his discretion may be necessary to save the Institution” (Stokes, 1982, p. 84). Because Elon depended so heavily on enrollment, Dr. Smith spent much of the 1930’s identifying ways to recruit students to Elon (Stokes, 1982). Elon saw a large increase in enrollment when they agreed in 1943 to train 672 pilots for World War II duty in the U.S. Army Air Corps (Elon University, 2006e).

Once the war ended, Elon, like many institutions of its time, increased student enrollment, mainly as a result of the G.I. Bill. The G.I. Bill was passed by Congress in 1944 to provide financial assistance to the veterans wishing to begin or finish their college education (Cohen, 1998). Elon was an immediate beneficiary of the G.I. Bill, as 80 veterans entered Elon in the fall of 1945. To accommodate more veterans, the Federal government built apartment buildings on campus to house the overflow (Stokes, 1982).

The increased enrollment allowed Elon to establish itself financially, open new buildings, and finally have a feeling of stability. The 1950’s saw continued growth in enrollment and physical buildings, improved athletics, and the establishment of the Alumni Association. In 1957, Dr. Smith, who many alumni refer to as the “savior of Elon” stepped down from the presidency. Stokes (1982) described his achievements as “phenomenal”. He restored the college to financial stability from impending bankruptcy, doubled the size of the physical plant while improving it throughout, and more than tripled the extent of all its activities” (p. 323). The most telling statistic of his tenure was

that amazingly, through all of the problems, Dr. Smith was able to raise enrollment from 87 students in 1931, to 1,630 students when he retired in 1957 (Keller, 2004). Although students became more diverse during his tenure, the majority of students remained from North Carolina, with a Methodist, Congregational Christian, or Baptist background (Stokes, 1982).

President James Danieley, a 1946 graduate of Elon and a faculty member, began office in a more stable position than his predecessor. His tenure was best known for making Elon “academically respectable, all while operating under strict guidelines” (Keller, 2004, p.4). Danieley immediately added counselors to help students academically and introduced additional obligations to religion to improve students’ spiritual welfare. In addition, faculty and students were frequently recognized as the College honored those that demonstrated academic excellence. Furthermore, events were established to bring in talented speakers from across the country to educate and entertain (Stokes, 1982).

During Dr. Danieley’s tenure, a more organized structure was developed to solicit contributions from the College’s loyal constituency. The Elon College Development Office was started in 1960 and was asked to begin a new fundraising campaign for campus renovations and building an endowment for scholarships and teacher salaries. Over the next ten years, two successful fundraising campaigns, the Diamond Anniversary Campaign and the E-4 Campaign, accomplished such goals as each campaign had gone “over the top” (Stokes, 1982, p. 373). As a result of the Diamond Anniversary Campaign, William S. Long Student Center was opened in 1966, along with the Hook,

Brannock and Barney Halls designed to house males students. The E-4 Campaign's main focus was to renovate existing buildings, particularly the Carlton Building and Whitley Auditorium, as well as construct a classroom/office building and a physical education building. The E-4 Campaign produced over \$3 million in gifts and resulted in the opening of Powell Building, the Jordan Gymnasium, and the Beck Pool (Elon, 2006). With the close of the second campaign, Dr. Danieley decided to step aside in 1973.

Much was accomplished during his tenure: seven new buildings had been built to meet the growing enrollment at Elon, the rest of the physical campus had been renovated and modernized, academic requirements had improved enough for Elon to become fully accredited, relations between Elon and the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ were good, and student enrollment was maintained (Stokes 1982). Perhaps the most gratifying accomplishment of President Danieley's time, was that even in very difficult times, the college became a very close community, which "set the tone for today's college" (p. 418).

Although academic and campus improvements were made, one area that did not change was the profile of the student (Stokes, 1982). Enrollment grew slightly from 1600 to 1800 students, however, Keller (2004) described the student population in Danieley's time as, "still local and under prepared for serious college work" (p.5).

The new president took office in 1973 and immediately began to rethink the long term interests of Elon. The ability to look long term rather than address immediate, obvious limitations was a first for any Elon leader. Stokes (1982) noted that at the time

the President took office, “the college was operating smoothly” and “the institution and its programs did not demand immediate attention” (p.423).

He and the Board quickly decided that Elon, since it financially depended so heavily on the enrollment, needed to modernize and expand the curriculum, make the students’ college life at Elon of the highest quality, and develop a more aesthetically pleasing campus. In the early 1970’s Elon’s campus was described as, “undistinguished” with few attractions for potential students and more importantly their parents (Keller, 2004, p.8). As one subject stated, “We did not have that ‘wow’ factor when people stepped on campus” (Subject Yetto).

Over the first three years, the President along with the Board, developed ways to “expand the college program and develop an operation to conform to it (Stokes, 1982, p. 429). The President placed a strong emphasis on upgrading the total learning environment, as he believed that a successful curriculum worked hand-in-hand with a positive student life program. It was this philosophy that fueled the PRIDE campaign, which was a capital fund drive to build athletic fields and a field house, parking, refurbish present buildings, provide academic scholarships, and construct the fine arts building (Stokes, 1982).

Student life in the 1970’s grew under the new presidency. Changes in student life were drastic as fraternities, sororities, national societies, and student organizations were started or enhanced. The curriculum was broadened to include new courses, as well as new departments. Perhaps the most significant change to the academic programs came in 1975 with the opening of the Academic Skills Program. The Program was designed for

students who “possessed adequate mental capacity but were handicapped with the inability to read with sufficient speed, take proper notes in class, and write acceptable papers” (Stokes, 1982, p. 456).

Elon’s Academic Skills Program became a symbol for the commitment that the College made to educate the student body, particularly those that needed additional assistance. Their commitment to the students was rewarded with a \$2 million grant from the Federal Government, which allowed the Academic Skills Program to develop into other areas with an overall result of improving the level of instruction at Elon. Areas that were improved included: academic enhancement, programs for non-traditional students, student life enrichment, and career planning to name a few (Stokes, 1982). According to the President, this grant, “allowed the institution to take off” (Keller, 2004, p.9). Another subject saw this as the beginning of the new Elon:

When I came to Elon we just received a \$2 million grant, which was used to bring in consultants and start planning in every academic department and some administrative departments too for the University. This really established this idea of continuous improvement. This helped bring to life the President’s vision of Elon and he absolutely had a vision about increasing quality at every level at Elon. And since that point it has always been a part of the fabric, continuous quality improvement has always been a part of the fabric of the Elon I know. (Subject Price)

Students quickly noticed the changes made by the new administration as enrollment increased 38% from 1973-1979. However, the student population was still made up of mainly average students from North Carolina and Virginia. Even with much growth happening on campus, the lack of change among the student population spurred the President and the Board to develop a new identity for Elon College (Keller, 2004).

The repositioning of the institution was based on the fact that Elon's personal attention to its students and an attractive campus in a warm weather climate had created an environment that students enjoyed. The administration was aware that Elon was positioned in a growing state located in the middle of the East Coast. The campus was also a short distance away from two growing areas, the Research Triangle (Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill) and the Piedmont Triad (Greensboro, High Point, and Winston-Salem). The mid 1980's brought about a major decision from the administration and the trustees to, "create a different kind of college for a different kind of student" (Keller, 2004, p.12).

The philosophy of the new Elon College was to move away from the local and regional admissions strategy that had been used in previous administrations to one that marketed and heavily recruited students from the east coast United States and internationally. Elon would also raise tuition and become a medium-cost college, rather than a low-cost college and recruit students from middle-class to wealthy families that could afford to pay full tuition, a must due to Elon's small endowment at the time (Keller, 2004).

To match the philosophy, Elon spent a tremendous amount of money recruiting specific students, adding faculty that were strong teachers willing to work closely with students, borrowing a tremendous amount of money, increasing alumni giving, creating new academic programs, and perhaps most importantly designing a first-class campus that would attract potential students and their families immediately (Keller, 2004).

By the end of 1980's, students from different states were attending Elon. Faculty members rose from 74 in 1980 to 125 by the end of 1989, the debt had grown to \$12 million, alumni giving grew from under \$1 million dollars in 1980 to \$2.8 million by 1989. The campus was rapidly improved with new buildings and facility improvements. The Duke Science Building, the Alamance Building, dining halls and computer labs were renovated. The fine arts building, the Koury Center, fraternity and sorority houses, the Jimmy Powell Tennis Center, and the Fonville Fountain all were opened to by the end of the 1980's (Elon University, 2006).

Academically the two year degrees were eliminated and four year programs in business, education, and the sciences were all strengthened. New majors in communications, computer systems, and leisure and sport management were introduced. Two master's degree programs, an M.B.A. in business and a M.Ed. in education were also started (Elon University, 2006). Overall, the administration and trustees were pleased with the initial stage of the improved Elon College. However, the 1990's brought additional changes (Keller, 2004).

*Since the transition: from the NAIA to the NCAA.*

The administration developed the "Plan for the 90's" which focused on the continued development of the academic and co-curricular programs, additional facilities and improved campus landscaping, and increased academic quality. These improvements were necessary in order to build on the success of the 1980's, however Elon lacked the funds to put the plans into motion. Based on the need for additional funds, the Board of

Trustees voted to begin an \$18 million campaign to finance the goal of becoming “one of the best institutions of its kind on the Eastern seaboard” (Keller, 2004, p.16).

At the same time, Elon’s intercollegiate athletics program was also moving from NAIA (National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics) to the NCAA Division II membership. A move that was necessary once the membership of the South Atlantic Conference felt that the NCAA was a better long-term fit for their members. More importantly, the move to the NCAA fit perfectly into Elon’s new institutional strategy (South Atlantic Conference, 2006; Keller, 2004).

As Elon moved into the 1990’s, a theme of distinction and uniqueness became fundamental to virtually every decision made. Among the decisions was intercollegiate athletics and moving into the NCAA. In looking back, administrators suggested that this was the first step in the process that would separate themselves, both athletically and academically, from area schools still laboring in NAIA, which was a fading association in college athletics and no longer compatible to Elon’s desired profile (Lederman, 1990; Monaghan, 1991).

Academically, Elon made a drastic change in the curriculum starting with a change from three credit hour classes to four. This was done to increase opportunities for active learning, which at the time was a drastic move away from the traditional lecturing format. There was some faculty concern as such a move required a great deal of evaluation of their current programs. A thorough examination of the curriculum was begun as course content was reviewed for each department. Those courses that were not practical were removed from the course catalog and those that were deemed valuable

were then enhanced to justify the extra credit hour. One administrator remembers the process as “very tedious, but it sent a clear message that we were going to expect a high level of learning within the courses that survived” (Subject Frank). After much debating, the faculty approved the new format, but only by 60% of the vote (Keller, 2004).

In the fall of 1993, Elon introduced students to a curriculum that was experiential in nature. Students would become more active in their learning, both mind and body. In the classroom students were challenged to critically analyze, participate in discussion, and become more engaged in their own learning. However, much of the changes in the curriculum occurred outside of the classroom. Global travel was strongly encouraged, more attention was given to internship programs across campus, and many courses especially during the winter term, would bring students to the experience rather than just a classroom lecture on the topic (Keller, 2004; Elon University, 2006a).

The former president understood that many of these changes could be a direct insult to alumni and local community that helped build and create Elon. As one administrator would state, “change can be difficult for some, especially when you start to suggest that what they did at Elon in the past, really wasn’t good enough...and we were not trying to do that” (Subject Price). To address this concern, the former president promoted programs that encouraged the longstanding values established by the founding fathers. Created from the administrations’ feeling that the values at Elon were still very much a part of the curriculum, was a program called the “Elon Experiences”. The program would consist of four experiences: study abroad, volunteer service, internship or co-ops, and leadership development (Elon University, 2002). The President

in 1994 described the reasoning behind the Elon Experiences by stating, “We chose four values – work, service, leadership, and cultural understanding – and made them the modern college’s equivalent of old-time religious inculcation” (Keller, 2004, p.21).

In 1994, the school once again put plans together to begin a new strategic campaign, Elon Vision. Monies would be raised in an effort to continue the improvements made with the academic programs, increase faculty salaries, build a new library, science building, and a new athletic stadium, as well as increase the endowment which had been sacrificed in the 1980’s to jump start Elon’s repositioning (Kearny, 2003).

As the 1990’s were rapidly coming to a close, Elon made giant strides toward becoming the school it had envisioned in the early 1980’s. Admissions applications continued to grow and Elon annually recruited a stronger student. New faculty were being recruited and hired specifically to enhance the experiential learning philosophy. Established faculty were rewarded with much needed raises and put on or very close to the same level as faculty at other peer institutions. In 1998, the Master of Physical Therapy program was established. In that same year, the Dalton L. McMichael Sr. Science Center opened as the first building from the Elon Visions capital campaign, which by the time it finished raised over \$46 million (Andrews, 1997; Keller, 2004). At the close of 1998, the former President that had created Elon into “a different kind of college for a different kind of student”, decided to step down (McMurtrie, 1998, p. B1).

*Division I status: After the reclassification.*

The current President of Elon was hired in 1999 and quickly continued some of the work established by the former president. First, he and his staff finished off the Elon Visions campaign, finishing the construction of the Belk Library, completing the transition of the intercollegiate athletics program to Division I, and continuing the emphasis of marketing Elon across the East and beyond. However, the President also placed a stronger emphasis on improving the academic curriculum at Elon. Elon had made drastic and well received changes in the curriculum and now the President felt it was time to make Elon an institution with nationally recognized programs, particularly as an institution that emphasizes engaged learning, strong teaching and increased scholarship (Keller, 2004; McMurtrie, 1998). One administrator would suggest that the new president, “Came to Elon with so much energy and he just kept rolling. Things just started happening so quickly. He really was aggressive – got things done” (Subject Yetto).

Since the current administration took office in 1999, Elon has continued to differentiate itself as an emergent liberal arts institution with an emphasis on combining teaching and scholarship, all while catching the attention of many constituents. One administrator simply suggested that, “we noticed that students really like Elon” (Subject Woods). Another coach would comment that, “at a time when many schools were tightening their budgets or struggling to survive, Elon was pushing forward” (Daniels, 2003, p. C4).

In 2000, a new strategic campaign was begun, entitled NewCentury @ Elon, which had three goals: the first, was enhancing academic excellence, the second is

providing facilities that support academic excellence and the third is providing resources that support academic excellence (Elon University, 2006d). The process of meeting their objectives in NewCentury was begun in the late 1990's. In years prior to the start of the campaign, Elon's faculty, administration, staff, and students had discussed the current culture of academics and found that, "the Elon culture fosters social interaction over intellectual challenge and that many students tended to over commit to out of class activities" (Keller, 2004, p. 59). In addition to challenging the students to tougher academic rigors, the president also began to introduce the idea of expanding the scholarship and research of the faculty. Over the last half decade, Elon has provided more resources to faculty in order to increase their commitment to scholarship and bring significant research to their classroom settings. And, although, the increased demand of research has not been welcomed by all faculty, the administration believes that scholarship and teaching are "inseparable because scholarship is the foundation of teaching", a philosophy they have deemed the "Elon Teacher-Scholar" (Elon University, 2006c).

A problem that some faculty have with this philosophy is that it is nothing more than language that essentially asks the faculty to move away from the attention given to teaching in order to focus on research, a pattern seen at the major research universities. One former faculty member lamented that, "Elon is losing its soul" and worries that as the school grows in stature, it will forget the commitment to the student, one of the institution's foundational values (Keller, 2004, p.33).

A common theme in all the outcomes in the NewCentury @ Elon plan has been based on strategic decisions that place Elon in categories similar to, or perhaps higher than, institutions that Elon hopes to emulate. In union with the philosophies of the NewCentury @ Elon plan, growth in stature was also being made in the athletics department, first transitioning into Division I-AA, next into the Big South Conference, and then finally moving conferences to the more prestigious Southern Conference. As one subject stated:

Expectations were, that as all of these other changes were taking place, that it would also eventually cover athletics, athletics was not going to be left back. As we make academic strides, and student life strides, and we incorporate our emphasis on engaged learning and international travel and SAT scores go up, then you know our athletic expectations also rise – and quite frankly, I think athletics was ready for greater expectations. (Subject Lewis)

Another subject stated that since the 1980's, Elon administration has always kept a balance in examining academic and athletic priorities. The administrator walked through the through process of the administration's decisions since the NAIA championships in the early 1980's:

The athletic program was winning national championships in everything (raising his right hand slightly above his head to indicate the athletics was at a very high level), where is the academic program (putting his left hand up to approximately shoulder length)? Here we are, oh ok. We are going to institute some new programs, some new fellows programs. The program starts getting better; we are up here like this (now placing his left hand at a higher level than his right, indicating that now academics is now much higher than athletics). Well ok then athletics we are going to move to division two so now they move to division two so now they are pushing the envelope. Wait, we are going to emphasize undergraduate research, students study abroad, we have all the students studying all over the world and then athletics what are you going to do? (The subject continues to move his right and left hand to indicate the balance that Elon tries to

have when making administrative decisions about academics and athletics). So I have seen the institution go back and forth, always trying to keep them on the same level. One not leaving the other behind we would stop and it is time to invest over here because, so it has been important as the institution has gone back and forth to academic and athletic program to be growing like this. (Subject Frank)

Examining memberships, accreditations, and associations outside of athletics, it becomes apparent that Elon is very concerned about establishing relationships with high level institutions. In March 2000, Elon was selected to membership in the Associated New American Colleges (ANAC), an association that the administration felt matched Elon's long term goals. The ANAC was founded in 1995, and "is a national consortium of twenty-two selective, small to mid-size (2,000-7,500 students) independent colleges and universities dedicated to the purposeful integration of liberal education, professional studies, and civic engagement" (Associated New American Colleges, 2006b). The goal of the ANAC, which has been labeled the New American College model, "offers students the academic breadth and depth found in national universities and the experience of working closely with faculty dedicated to excellent teaching and scholarly accomplishment found in many liberal arts colleges" (Associated New American Colleges, 2006b).

In addition to the membership into the ANAC, Elon has pushed to have its schools recognized through membership into the highest national associations. In 2000, Elon submitted a preliminary application for Phi Beta Kappa, but was initially rejected. A Phi Beta Kappa chapter would honor Elon for excellence in the school of arts and sciences. It is the nation's oldest and largest academic honor society. The goal of Phi

Beta Kappa is to support the ideals of the society through social, academic and community programs (Phi Beta Kappa, 2006). An Elon administrator indicated how difficult it is to become a member in Phi Beta Kappa, “it is almost impossible for a university to be accepted the first time it applies. Also, because applications are only accepted every three years, it can take a very long time before an institution is offered admission to Phi Beta Kappa, if admission is offered at all” (Belanger, 2003). Elon resubmitted an application for the Phi Beta Kappa membership in November 2003 and expects to hear in the spring of 2007 (Abbott, 2004).

Another controversial move that sent a disturbance through the constituency base was the restructuring of Elon from a college to a university. More than just a name change, the school also reorganized into the Love School of Business, the School of Education, the School of Communications, and the arts and sciences into a liberal arts college, named Elon College. On June 1, 2001, the institution would officially move from a college to a university and change the name to Elon University, putting to rest the heated and emotional discussions took place for almost ten years (Elon University, 2006e). Administrators would discuss this change at great length, suggesting that this change may have been the biggest organizational change over the last two administrations.

There was a big resistance to the name change from College to University. And that was at least a 10 year process; it was all part of the Elon Vision. You know once we finished all of those goals and we built all of those buildings, and the stadium – it became why shouldn’t we do this? Before it was a feeling of being pretentious, or showy, or arrogant. I mean we had the new academic village, the MBA, the Division I athletics, we had the physical therapy program. Almost to not change would be dishonest...which it was – Elon was bigger than 60 percent

of the Universities in the country. I mean this was not a name change, it was an institutional positioning – which– it was earned. Elon became a university, and then there was the name change. Everybody recognized it. The other thing is that we were trying to deal with international students, and colleges overseas are secondary schools and so it can really turn off students to come to the United States and attend a college. All the surveys showed that by 2 to 1, students wanted to attend a university rather than a college, so why do we want to cripple your market. Early on I was not a promoter of the name change, or the mascot change (from Fighting Christians to Phoenix), but both became necessities. The current president was an absolute master of this. He is skillful, motivated and he wasn't trapped by the past. His timing was perfect. He can make a clean break. He wasn't trapped by the College, or the Fighting Christians, it wasn't emotional – he wasn't trapped. But if the old president was here – they would have said, 'what in the hell is he doing?' His skill level and the circumstances and the timing of the change was perfect. (Subject Yetto)

The University for example was a reflection of what we really already were, I thought we should have done it some years earlier, but the community was just not comfortable with moving that quickly. Ok fine, so we already were one. (Subject Price)

The faculty meetings had some passionate talk that we can not be a university we are named a college we should remain a college, the main reason was that they felt university equals big, college small. We wanted to remain small; we had built this great relationship as a college with the students, faculty, and administration. There was some resistance there, since then nothing changed, that is why we went to university cause our sense of student involvement our sense of community, none of that changed. (Subject Tower)

The university issue had to be dealt with it had been a topic of discussion for ten years practically and it was, we couldn't finish up our long term plans without making some kind of decision. And sure enough the year after we did that we got a 25% increase in applications, and that is what consultants told us. And that is not why Elon did it, but it was comforting to know that this was a good, probably a good recommendation for admissions. Can anyone say that that was the only thing that changed that a lot of things were changing, but 25% in one year? Elon has many more reasons to do that then 95% of the colleges that were changing their names from college to university. That is one of the things they told us is that you are perfect to do it because when kids come here they think they are at a university. In a lot of places they come in and this is not the case, here it is a university, so we can live up to the name. (Subject Price)

The accreditation of the schools would continue, as the Love School of Business received accreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) in April 2004. This accreditation is the highest possible in business education and indicated Elon's commitment in make major investments and improvements in the quality of the business programs. In a 2004 press release the president stated that the accreditation "fulfills one of the major objectives of our NewCentury@Elon strategic plan". The Elon administration was proud to promote that Elon joins Wake Forest University and Duke University as the only other independent North Carolina schools as members in the AACSB (Elon University, 2004).

Within the School of Education, Elon has become renowned for the consistent achievements of its teacher education program, which is accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). NCATE membership is described as a "mark of distinction" and is recognized by the US Department of Education as the "accrediting body for colleges and universities that prepare teacher and other professional personnel for work in elementary and secondary schools" (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2006). In addition, the teacher education program is one of only two private schools (Meredith College is the other) in the state selected to offer the prestigious North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program. The North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program is a highly selective program that provides a \$6,500 scholarship for four years to 500 of the best high schools seniors in the state of North Carolina that intended to teach after college in North Carolina (North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program, 2006).

In 2006 the School of Communications was welcomed by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) as a member to its very selective association. Elon is only the 18<sup>th</sup> private institution in the world to be accepted as a member. Elon joined well known schools with top communications programs, such as Syracuse University, Northwestern University, University of Southern California, and Columbia University to name a few (Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, 2006; Elon University Schools of Communications, 2006).

Elon has also made an increased effort to improve the information technology on campus, including not only new computers and innovative technology but a new Technology Center, which helped faculty incorporate the innovative equipment and modern programs into the classrooms. The administration did not stop at just equipment and technology, but made another major push for campus construction.

Over the last six years, Elon has opened Rhodes Stadium (2001), Isabella Cannon International Studies Pavilion and William R. Kenan Jr. Honors Pavilion in the Academic Village (2002) Belk Track and White Field are completed (2002), and Ella Darden and Elmon Lee Gray Pavilion also opened in Academic Village (2004). Most recently, Elon completed the Oaks Residence Halls and the Koury School of Business in 2006 (Elon University, 2006e).

Since the start of the NewCentury strategic plan, Elon has continued to increase enrollment but has not sacrificed its academic standards. The intention to increase enrollment was started by the previous administration and continued into the 21<sup>st</sup>

Century. In 1990, Elon's undergraduate population was 3,140 students (total enrollment was 3,263), compared to the fall 2005 undergraduate enrollment of 4,702 (total enrollment was 4,956). Most impressive is the improvement in the number of students that applied and the acceptance rate of those that applied. In 1991, 3,313 applied and 70% were accepted to Elon, which is a drastic difference to 2005 when 9,065 applied and only 41% were accepted. Because of the high number of applicants, Elon has the flexibility to choose the best students for their campus. During the last 15 years, the SAT score has steadily improved. The SAT scores have increased annually from 1030 in 1991 to 1208 in 2005 (Elon University, 2005).

All of the changes that Elon made received numerous accolades. *U.S. News & World Report* ranks Elon University third among 127 Southern master's-level universities in its 2007 "America's Best Colleges" guide, behind Rollins College in Florida and James Madison University in Virginia (U.S News & World Report, 2006). Elon continues to improve in the *U.S News & World Report* ranking, up from number five in 2006. *U.S News & World Report* also recognized Elon specifically for programs that the institution has emphasized over the last two decades: learning communities, service learning, undergraduate research and creative products, first-year experiences, study abroad programs, internships, and senior capstone (Elon University, 2006a).

Elon has been named one of the nation's top 47 "best value" private colleges and universities by *The Princeton Review*. *The Princeton Review* lists Elon in several categories in its 2007 "The Best 361 Best Colleges" guide. Elon ranked third on the guide's "School Runs Like Butter" list, which examines institutional efficiency. Elon

was also ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in *the Princeton Review's* most beautiful campus in the nation list, and the MBA program was the second best administered business program in the 2007 listing of "The Best 282 Business Schools." In addition, Elon was named one of the 25 "hottest colleges" in the country in the 2006 edition of the Newsweek-Kaplan college guide. The 2007 *Fiske Guide to Colleges* lists Elon among 26 of the nation's "best buy" private colleges and universities. The Education Trust recognizes Elon for excellence in freshman retention and outstanding graduation rates (Elon University, 2006a).

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century has seen the Elon administration aggressively make decisions that focus on improving its status in higher education, through improved academic programs, enhanced student life, new or renovated campus facilities, the hiring of more faculty and administration that cater to the Elon philosophy, as well as an upgrade to a Division I intercollegiate athletics program.

*Elon Athletics: From NAIA to Division I*

**Theme: A long established tradition of athletic participation and past intercollegiate success at Elon influenced the decision to move to Division I.**

The following section documents the history of Elon athletics. For convenience to the reader the athletics history is broken up in the following stages: early history, the 1970's and 80's, and the final stage captures Elon's athletic teams since the move to the NCAA's.

*Early history.*

Elon has always placed a strong emphasis on athletic competition, even in the late 1800's when it was just trying to survive as an institution of higher learning. Early

administrators believed that a strong body would go hand in hand with a strong mind, and therefore, promoted the importance of physical activity and athletic competition. This belief, according to Mechikoff (2000), was not uncommon for leaders to justify participating in sport by using religion. Those who believed in muscular Christianity, believed that “there is something innately good and godly about competition, brute strength, and power” (p. 234).

In 1900, baseball became the first sport at Elon College permitted to participate in intercollegiate competition and play games off campus. In 1909, football was added but was quickly stopped after one year due to the violence of the sport. By the 1910-11 seasons, Elon College added tennis to the intercollegiate athletic opportunities (Waggoner, 1989).

In 1911, Elon hired its first athletic director, Bob Doak, who also coached basketball, baseball, and track, and taught courses in mathematics and English. The hiring of athletic department employees to administrate, teach, and coach was a trend that would continue for years to come at Elon. Under Doak the men’s basketball team experienced some regional success, winning the state basketball championship twice (1914-15). This was essentially accomplished by having the best record against teams from within the state. In that era, Elon formed a loosely affiliated basketball conference along with Guilford, Trinity (now Duke University), the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Wake Forest, and A & M (now North Carolina State University). In addition, the college built a new gym in 1913, called Alumni Memorial Building, which

at the time was considered to be, “one of the best facilities in the entire South, and certainly the best in North Carolina” (Waggoner, 1989, p. 22).

Although basketball experienced early success, other sports at Elon did not. Baseball had also grown into an 18 game schedule against the best schools in North Carolina and the South region, however wins were few. Tennis and later track which started at Elon in 1912, experienced little success early on as well, mainly due to lack of interest. Football, which was always popular at Elon was reintroduced as an official athletic team at Elon in 1919, also did not many experience many victories (Waggoner, 1989; Tolley 1985).

Although the athletic programs experienced limited success, the role of intercollegiate athletics was set at Elon. Administrators viewed a strong athletic program as a way to teach sportsmanship, teamwork, and integrity. When President Harper hired C.C. Johnson, the first alumnus to coach at Elon, Harper stated that he most admired Johnson because he believed athletics was “as an opportunity to experience men in those rare graces and embellishments of personal and social living. He (Johnson) did not play to win, but to build character” (Waggoner, 1989, p. 33). This grounded philosophy toward athletic competition may have been a large factor why faculty supported the growth of intercollegiate athletics at Elon. In addition, the administration obviously did not place undue pressure on the teams to win, but rather compete fairly and represent Elon in the highest regard. Waggoner (1989) writes that the aim of the College was to “encourage participation in athletics by all students rather than a few, for it was believed that the most effective physical training was found in well-regulated athletics” (p. 43).

The 1920's, and 30's, saw the Elon athletic programs flourish under the Athletic Director Douglas Clyde "Peahead" Walker and President Smith. From 1927 to 1937 Walker, who also served as coach won five football, four basketball, and six baseball Conference championships. In 1930, Elon and five other schools formed the North State Atlantic Conference (NSIAC). The charter members of the NSIAC, also known as the "Little Six", broke from the North Carolina Intercollegiate Athletic Conference to form their own league. These charter members included Lenoir-Rhyne College, Atlantic Christian, Catawba College, Guilford College, Elon College, and High Point College (Switzer, 2006). Interesting enough, one subject wondered about Elon's decision to associate the athletic program with the smaller schools and not other schools that placed a heavier emphasis on athletics:

And I often wonder what would have happened in 1927-1928 if we had gone and said we will play sports with North Carolina, Duke, Davidson, Wake Forest, and North Carolina State. I wonder where our athletic program would be now, I don't know what could have happen. In some sports it would take the Elon miracle for us to all of the sudden be spoken in the same breath with Wake Forest, Duke, Carolina, and NC State. (Subject Tower)

When President Smith came aboard in 1931, he strongly encouraged the Board of Trustees to support athletics because he saw it as a way to increase enrollment. His attitude toward athletics was quite different from his predecessors as he stated in a *Greensboro Daily News* article, "if you were going to play, you might as well play to win" (Stokes, p. 258). In order to improve the talent on the teams, the practice of financial assistance began under President Smith (Stokes, 1982; Waggoner, 1989).

World War II brought a temporary stoppage in athletic competition from 1942-1944, with basketball starting during the 1944-45 academic year. Even when athletics grew to full strength by the fall of 1946, Elon struggled immediately to regain the success it had in the 1930's. However, wins were starting to happen again as the decade closed, particularly in football, basketball, and baseball (Tolley, 1985; Waggoner, 1989). Baseball had captured a Conference Championship in 1949, and then continued winning in the fifties by adding 5 additional Championships (Waggoner, 1989; Rash, 2006a). Football finished the 1949 season with 8 wins and only 2 loses and then had 7 wins in 1950, 6 wins in 1951, 5 win seasons in 1954 and 1956, and then went undefeated in 1957 (Elon University Sports Information Office, 2006a). Basketball captured back-to-back District 26 Championships in 1956 and 1957, and under Head Coach "Doc" Mathis won 24 or more games in four different seasons (1951-52, 1952-53, 1955-56, 1956-57). During this time, Elon had also experienced regional and even national attention as it played in NAIS National Tournaments in basketball (1952, 1956, 1957) and baseball (1958) (Waggoner, 1989, Donald, 2006a; Rash, 2006a).

Waggoner (1989) describes the 1960's as a time of individual accomplishments, not championship teams at Elon. However, a closer look at the records, indicate that success was not unheard of in the era, and in fact a few championships were won. Perhaps the lack of recognition was an indication of the rising expectations from the success during the 1950's. Basketball, for example won a majority of the games, and had won 20 games in three different seasons (in 1963-64, 1968-69, 1969-70), but they were unable to capture any regular season North State or Carolinas Intercollegiate Athletic

Conference Championships in that decade (in 1961 North State Conference name officially changed as the Carolinas Intercollegiate Athletic Conference). The team did however capture the CIAC Tournament Championship in 1965 with a win over High Point College to advance to the NAIA District Finals. Similar patterns existed with baseball, as the team had a 23-9 record in 1960-61 and 1963-64 but were unable to capture championships throughout the decade (Donald, 2006b).

The football program had their most successful season since their 1957 undefeated season, when in 1964 the team captured the CIAC Championship and finished 8-1-1. In addition, the team was ranked as high as five in the national small-college standings during the year (Elon University Sports Information Office, 2006a). Golf, a sport long been dormant at Elon, finally broke through in the sixties and had exceptional seasons in 1960, 1962, and 1969 qualified for the NAIA National Tournament (Tolley, 1985; Waggoner, 1989).

Individual achievers also began to bring attention to Elon College. Basketball star Jesse Branson, football players Richard McGeorge and Burgin Beale received conference, regional, and national recognition during their time at Elon. McGeorge went on to play professional football for the Green Bay Packers and brought national exposure to his alma mater during television and radio broadcasts, as well as national newspapers and other sports publications (Waggoner, 1989). Jesse Branson went on to also play professionally, briefly in the National Basketball Association (NBA) and then he flourished in the American Basketball Association (ABA) in 1968 for the New Orleans Buccaneers (Basketball Reference, 2006).

*The 1970's and 1980's.*

During the 1970's and 1980's Elon began to receive national attention through their athletic teams. In 1973, the football team became number one in the country for small school college football (NAIA). Elon had gone to 12-0 before finally losing in the NAIA Championship playoff game. The following year, Elon was ranked as high as second in the country and once again lost in the NAIA playoff. The pattern repeated itself again in 1976, 1977, and 1978 as the Fighting Christians worked their way up to the top five of the national small college football rankings but could not win the NAIA Championship Game. During those three years, Elon football became a "small school powerhouse" going 31-5-1 and establishing themselves as a force in NAIA football competition. Finally, in 1980 the Elon football team won their first of two NAIA national football championships under Head Coach Jerry Tolley, an accomplishment that would repeat again in 1981. These years were by far the golden years of Elon football. Over the next decade Elon would settle into good, but not great years. The football program would not capture another conference title in the 1980's and did not return to the NAIA playoff again (Tolley, 1985; Waggoner, 1989; Elon University Sports Information Office, 2006a).

Another team that produced NAIA championships and was thrust into the national spotlight was men's golf. Beginning in 1973, the golf team began an almost two decade run of success. During the 70's and 80's, Elon would capture eight conference championships, five district championships, and in 1982 the NAIA National Golf Championship. Elon failed to make the 1988 NAIA tournament, which would end a 12

year streak of appearing in the NAIA final tournament. By the end of the eighties, men's golf had become "the most prominent sport at the college" (Waggoner, 1988, p. 178; Elon University Sports Information Office, 2006b).

Men's soccer was added in 1972 at Elon and took some time to become competitive. During their first seven years of competition, Elon only managed 15 wins in 82 games. However the eighties brought eight winning seasons, including two conference championships, one district championship and numerous individual awards (Rash, 2006b).

During the same time frame, the other high profile sports, baseball and men's basketball, experienced moderate success. The baseball program went to the NAIA Area VII playoff in 1973 and won the Carolinas Conference Baseball Championship the following year. In 1977, as a new Newsome Baseball Field at Elon's campus was being constructed, the baseball program received national recognition when they dominated the competition for 30 wins and captured the District championship. In 1979, Elon won the Carolinas Conference regular season title and finished ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in the NAIA polls. From 1985-1989, the Fightin' Christians captured four NAIA District 26 titles and three appearances at the NAIA World Series (Northington, 1990; Rash, 2006a).

Men's basketball began the 1970's with four straight twenty win seasons and won the Conference Championship in 1971 and the Conference Tournament in 1972, led by Elon legend Tommy Cole, who was later drafted to play professional basketball by the Boston Celtics. Men's basketball's last successful season was in 1973-74 when they would win 23 games. Over the next 11 years, Elon men's basketball would settle into

average or sub par seasons, not reaching a 20 win season again until 1986 (Tolley, 1985; Waggoner, 1989; Donald, 2006b).

Ironically, as the men's team suffered, a new program would step to the forefront as a model of triumph. In 1971, Elon added women's basketball to their intercollegiate athletic programs, which was the first women's team established at the college. Led by women's basketball icon, Head Coach Kay Yow, Elon would quickly become a consistently strong program. In the first four years, Elon would win 75% of their games, highlighted by the 1973-74 season when they won 20 games, lost only once, and captured the women's state tournament by beating Western Carolina University. Elon would continue on to the regional championship but lose in the first round to Winthrop College. Elon would follow the same pattern the following year, capturing the AIAW state title but lose in the regionals. Yow would move on to coach at North Carolina State and wins were not as many over the next four seasons. However, the program quickly rebounded in the early 1980's as the program won Carolinas Conference Championships in 1981 and 1982 (Carden, 1985; Waggoner, 1989).

The 1970's would also see Elon add other sports throughout the next two decades, volleyball (1972) softball (1976), tennis (1978), and soccer (1986). Similar to the women's basketball program, the softball team and the volleyball team would also experience immediate success. The 1978 softball team finished with 19 wins and won the North Carolina AIAW State Championship. The 1980 team would also do quite well, going 30-10 and capture a CIAC Championship. The following year the Lady Christians would win the Conference Championship again. Hard times hit the softball program in

the 1980's as the Lady Christians did not have a winning record in the conference for the remainder of the decade (Carden, 1985; Waggoner, 1989; Donald, 2006c).

Volleyball followed the same pattern as the other women's programs: many wins early in the inaugural seasons (1972-1976) and then a sudden drop off to mediocrity in the 1980's. In 1972, '73, and '74 the volleyball program advanced each year to the state and regional tournament, only to lose each year in the postseason. The volleyball team would not reach the postseason again throughout the '70's and '80's (Carden, 1985; Waggoner, 1989; Donald, 2006d).

The women's tennis team was introduced in 1978 and had always been consistently good throughout the 1980's, however, the program could never finish above second in the Conference. The program appeared to be ready to establish itself as a perennial champion as they finished with three 10 win seasons from 1986-87 to 1988-89, however, compared to the success that the men's tennis team experienced the results of their female counterparts paled in comparison (Waggoner, 1989; Rash, 2006c).

The men's tennis team had a long history at Elon, beginning in 1904-05 and throughout time, had experienced periods of success. With the possible exception of the 1930's, no era stands out more for the tennis team than the late 1980's. The early eighties were certainly quality years as the team won more than 10 matches in each of the first seven years. However, the team took a major leap forward in 1987 when they won 20 and lost only three, won the CIAC Championship, the District Championship and advanced to the NAIA National Tournament. The team would also win the Conference

the next two years and advance to the National Tournament (Tolley, 1985; Waggoner, 1989; Rash, 2006c).

Two other men's teams, wrestling and track and field produce few accolades and even smaller attention. In the 1970's, Elon offered no scholarships to track and field and thus had an ever changing roster and no home track. Wrestling was a program that was restarted in 1967 failed to generate any consistent student interest and was discontinued after the 1985-86 season (Tolley, 1985; Waggoner, 1989).

*Since the transition: from the NAIA to the NCAA.*

Elon began the 1990's in the South Atlantic Conference, but the decade would bring about numerous changes as the Elon athletic department would go from NAIA to the NCAA Division II, and then finally to Division I-AA. Many of the programs could not keep up their winning ways as the competition became tougher. The following section is an historical account of the athletic teams from the 1990's to 2006.

Over the years, football had become an extremely popular sport at Elon, particularly during the early 1980's, when Elon captured two NAIA national championships (1981, 1982). However, the remainder of the 1980's and the first two years in the 1990's Elon did not participate in another NAIA postseason game. The 1992 season, its last in the NAIA, Elon finished strong with an 8-2 record, just missing out on the NAIA playoffs. When the SAC-8 football conference moved from NAIA to the NCAA Division II in the fall of 1993, Elon had hoped for new success. An 8-3 record, and another near miss to the playoffs was a good start, however, the Fighting Christians

did not have another winning record until 1999 (Elon University Sports Information Office, 2006; Switzer, 2006).

In 1999, the football program established itself as a strong Division I-AA football program, finishing the season at 9-2 and barely missing the Division I-AA playoff. The nine wins were the most at Elon since 1981. The team was ranked as high as 20 in the USA Today Top 25 Division I-AA polls. The successful season left one local sports writer stating that, "If there was any doubt in the past two years that Elon College should not have made the move to Division I-AA football, it was erased" (Michael, 1999, p. C4).

In 2001, the Elon football team played its first ever home football game as Rhodes Stadium was officially opened on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, in front of over 10,000 spectators against North Carolina A&T. The game, and the season, ended in disappointment as the Phoenix lost convincingly to A&T, 23-7 and stumbled to a 2-9 season (Keech, 2001).

The 2002 season, the one and only season competing in the poorly constructed Big South Conference saw Elon once again finish with only four wins. The next season, their first in the more competitive Southern Conference, would get worse for the football program, winning just two games. In the next two seasons Elon would only win three games each year, capped by a winless season in the Southern Conference in 2005 (Elon University Sports Information Office, 2006a; Southern Conference, 2006). Since 1989, Elon has hired four coaches, all of whom lost more games than they won, did not win a single championship and did not play in any postseason games. The results were the

complete opposite of the glory days in the early 1980's in NAIA (Elon University Sports Information Office, 2006a).

The men's golf team which had experienced euphoric levels of triumph in the 1980's, could not sustain that high level during the 1990's and into the Division I era. From 1990-1992, the golf program finished first in their conference and the district and made the NAIA tournament. They would also capture the conference title in 1993 and 1994 but not make national tournament appearances. The last national tournament appearance came in 1997, when they finished 10<sup>th</sup> in the NCAA Division II national tournament. Since moving to Division I, the men's golf team has not finished higher than third in their conference and has not participated in any post season tournaments (Elon University Sports Information Office, 2006b; Switzer, 2006).

In 1990, the men's tennis team captured the NAIA National Championship. The National Championship highlighted a run of eleven straight conference championships and eleven national tournament appearances (1987-1997). Although the team has not captured another national championship since 1990, their success during that time frame was unmatched (men's tennis media guide). Since the move to Division I however, conference championships have not come as easy. Victories however, have remained, as the 2006 team won 18 games and went an impressive 8-1 in Southern Conference matches (Rash, 2006c).

Men's basketball had some modest success in the late 1980's however, with the move to the Division II level, wins were few. The first year in Division II competition, 1993-1994, Elon only managed five wins in 26 games. The following year Elon recorded

its worst season in recent history going 3-24; including a loss to Mars Hill on February 9, 1994, the first game in the new \$7 million renovation project at Alumni Gymnasium (McCann, 1994). In 1996-1997 Elon won 16 games and for the first time in six years and finished the season with a winning percentage above .500. However, the basketball program could not build on that success as they continued to lose more games than they won until the 2005-2006, when they went 15-14. Overall, the recent men's basketball history has not been good. Since leaving the NAIA to become a full NCAA member (Division II and I), Elon men's basketball has won only 39 percent of its games. The winning percentage (41 percent) does not improve much when examining only the Division I history (1997-2006) (Donald, 2006b).

Baseball also had a storied past moving into the 1990's and it appeared as though the winning would continue as the 1990 season brought 40 wins and an NAIA District 26 playoff appearance (Northington, 1990). Elon would capture Conference Championships in both 1990 and 1991. From 1993-1996 (NCAA Division II) Elon would go an impressive 141-81 and capture another SAC Championship and an NCAA Division II South Regional Championship in 1997 (Switzer, 2006). Since the move to Division I in 1998, the baseball program has remained very competitive, handling the transition from Division II to Division I smoothly. Even in a down year in 1999 when the team lost a school record 35 games, they still beat the University of Miami, which was the number one ranked Division I baseball team in the country. Since 2000, the baseball team has won 30 or more games and finished above .500 in each season (Rash, 2006a). In 2002, Elon would play in its first NCAA Division I regional playoff game and in 2006 they

would get the school's first win in the NCAA playoffs, defeating Mississippi State. Also in 2006 the Elon baseball team would win a Southern Conference Championship and record a school record 45 victories (Rash, 2006a; Elon University Athletics Department, 2006).

The men's soccer team was not able to build on the school record 16 wins in 1987. The close of the NAIA and the introduction into the NCAA's did not bring many wins to the program. In 1992, Elon captured 10 wins, the most wins for the remainder of the decade. In 2005, Elon went 9-9-1, however, finished third in the Southern Conference, and won its first Southern Conference Tournament game, beating Appalachian State, 1-0 (Southern Conference, 2005; Switzer, 2006).

Women's programs at Elon have experienced flashes of success, particularly at the NCAA Division II level, but have not been able to sustain any consistency since moving to Division I.

The 1993 softball team captured the SAC Championship in 1992 and posted a 37-10 record (Switzer, 2006). From 1993-1997, the softball program had a combined record of 106-33-5, along with the SAC Tournament Championship in 1993. The 2004 softball squad collected the most victories at Elon since moving to Division I, finishing the season 33-23-1 and 11-10 in the Southern Conference, good for third in the league. In addition, the Phoenix captured their first ever Southern Conference tournament wins in 2004. However, the softball program could not build on the '04 season and fell back to below .500 over the next two years (Donald, 2006c).

The women's basketball program has had some good seasons, but has been more mediocre than exceptional. During the 1990's, Elon women's basketball recorded a winning percentage of 46% (124-148), including a 16 win and 17 win season in 1996-1997 and 1997-1998. Winning has not come at a much faster pace in the new century, as the program has won only 48 percent of its games. The best season in recent history was the 2002-03 season, when Elon finished with 19 wins and was 11-3 in the Big South Conference. The women's basketball team has not played in an NCAA Tournament game and has yet to capture a conference championships at any level since 1982 (Rash, 2006d).

The volleyball program had great success in the 1990's, prior to the jump to Division I in 1998. From 1990-1997, the volleyball team did not win fewer than 23 games. During the same stretch, Elon won four regular season SAC Championships. However, in each of those years, Elon was unable to capture the Tournament Championships and thus failed to advance to the NAIA or NCAA Tournaments (Switzer, 2006). Since moving to Division I the Elon volleyball program has suffered. The 2004 team, however, did finish with more wins than loses (18-14), which was a first for the Division I program (Donald, 2006d).

The women's tennis program won the SAC Championship in 1993 and 1995 but have not been able to sustain the championship level in the Division I era. In 1998-1999, they went an impressive 17-3 but have struggled against Division I competition, specifically Southern Conference competition (Rash, 2006c; Switzer, 2006). The women's cross country program was the South Atlantic Conference Champion in 1996,

but that program has not captured a championship at the Division I level (Switzer, 2006). Finally, the women's golf program, started in 1998, has not finished higher than second in conference play (Elon University Sports Information Office, 2006b).

Perhaps the only women's program that has shown more than just fleeting levels of accomplishment has been the soccer team. The women's soccer team began the 1990's with great success, capturing the most wins in a season (19 wins) in 1992, and the highest winning percentage (.789) in 1991 and 1995 (Rash, 2006e). From 1990-1996, Elon only lost four conference games and finished first six out of seven years (Switzer, 2006).

The move to Division I did not hinder the women's soccer team's progress as they captured the Big South Tournament Championship in 1999 and became the first program at Elon to go to a Division I NCAA Tournament. The following two years, the women's team won the Big South regular season championship but failed to advance to the NCAA's (Big South Conference, 2006). The program could not continue the success, as the move to the Southern Conference has not been good. The program has not been able to capture more than six wins in any year since becoming a member of the Conference (Rash, 2006e).

The men's and women's cross country team had captured the South Atlantic Conference Championships in 1993, 1994, and 1996. But, similar to many other programs at Elon have not been able to experience many victories since the move to Division I (Donald, 2006a).

*Higher education environment – the private schools*

**Theme: Because of private institutions' decreasing enrollment patterns of the 1950's, 60's and 70's, as well as the demographics indicating that during the 1980's the enrollment numbers would continue to drop, Elon responded to the fiercely competitive environment by improving the quality of their students' collegiate experience, while staying just below their peers' tuition price. As part of the improvement to student life would be an upgrade in the athletic program.**

*Prior to the reclassification – 1970-1990.*

During the mid 1970's the long-term status of private colleges and universities in the United States appeared to be in jeopardy. In fact, many higher education experts predicted the demise of the private institution mainly due to the financial insecurities of the times (Cohen, 1998). Moynihan (1975) predicted that, "By the 1990's private universities as they are now known could well have disappeared, been absorbed in the state system, or divested themselves of all but their few profitable operations" (p. 143). Certainly the enrollment numbers leading up to the mid 1970's also indicated that the downward trend of students enrolling in private institutions would continue (Lyman, 1975).

In 1974, the new administration began the process of changing Elon from a "small, unattractive bottom feeder" (Keller, 2004, p.4) into today's version as one of the "best private schools in the Southeast (US News & World Report, 2006). The commitment to change was driven by the administrative decisions during the 1970's and

80's that addressed the shifting higher education environment. Elon's plan was best described in an article written by James Moncure in the *Magazine of Elon*:

The place of the small liberal arts school in the future rests in the quality of student life. The mammoth universities will have faculties certainly as good as those in the small colleges, but the behemoth institutions cannot provide the life style, the maturing environment that a small college can offer. Elon College knows this and is doing something about it. (Stokes, 1982, p. 205)

The mid-1970's was a tough time for private colleges; looking back, many schools were at a crossroads between future success and failure, including Elon. At the time, enrollments were dropping, and private schools were struggling to stay afloat. The reality was Elon was still trying to attract enough students in order to keep Elon financially sound (Newsom, 2004). During the late 1970's the administration began discussing and slowly implementing a plan to be more aggressive in their recruitment and retention of students, with the understanding that the students' enrollment and tuition was the lifeblood to the future (Stokes, 1982).

The administration at Elon understood that they had to justify their tuition costs, especially when compared to the public and some private schools located within the state that charged much less than Elon. Elon traditionally had filled its beds with students from North Carolina's farms and textile towns. Many students, in fact, were the first in their families to go to college. But, similar to trends seen throughout the country, many of the local students were passing up Elon to attend the state's much cheaper public schools (Newsom, 2004).

As the 1980's began, the administration implemented the marketing plan to

change their recruitment and admissions process. Much of this was due to the enrollment patterns seen in the 1950's, 60's and 70's, as well as the demographics that indicated that during the 1980's the enrollment numbers would drop. The administration felt that if they did not make a change in their recruitment strategy then it would be quite possible they would not survive the weeding out process of the private institutions predicted in the late 1970's (Keller, 2004).

In response to these growing concerns, Elon made numerous changes to become more "student friendly" and went into an aggressive promotion to inform students along the East Coast about the improved Elon College. The administration felt that it was no longer an option to sit and wait for students to choose Elon, because many of them may not. The plan was to recruit, admit, and graduate students that could afford the tuition prices and succeed in the environment Elon was creating. As one administrator would state, "we became aggressive in finding the right student for Elon" (Subject Price).

Because many private institutions rely on student tuition to offset operational expenses, many private schools increased their tuition at an alarming rate in the 1980's. In 1993, the National Commission on Responsibilities for Financing Postsecondary Education reported that the cost of attending a private college jumped 146 percent in the 1980's (Shea, 1993). Many private colleges in the 1980's implemented a "peer pricing," strategy, inflating tuition in the belief that families associate high price with quality. In addition, some private institutions reacted to pricing strategies that were implemented by peer institutions. A chain reaction of increases began to take place as one school would react to the pricing decisions of another. Added to the rising costs of higher education

tuition was also the uncontrolled inflation, which sent tuition astronomically high (Brownstein, 2001).

*Since the transition: from the NAIA to the NCAA.*

Since 1990, Elon's tuition plus room and board has increased every year at least 5% each year, with an average increase of 6.8 percent. At Elon, the tuition plus room and board increase has followed the path of the private institutions; however Elon has remained just below the 4-year private college national average. In 2006-2007, the national average of tuition plus room and board for a private institution was \$29,026, compared to Elon's total cost which was \$27,291 (Elon University, 2007). Similar to other peer institutions, Elon has used the increase in student costs to improve campus, academic programs, and hire more administrators and staff (Elon University, 2006c).

In the mid to late 1990's Elon and its constituency began to see the results of their master plan, as continued expansion in buildings, improvements in student learning, an increased number of strong administrators, facility, and staff lead to better academic programs and an emerging institutional profile. The \$50 million Vision Campaign, which began in the early 1990's had a plan to make Elon one of the best private colleges in the Southeast by the year 2000 (Andrews, 1997; Elon University, 2006c). To do this Elon, without much delay, initiated the experiential learning program, and built new buildings including a state of the art library and science building. Elon also applied some of the revenue from tuition and, as one administrator stated, "began spending more money to hire and retain qualified faculty and staff." (Andrews, 1997, p. B1). This also

included a 10 percent raise for all faculty in 1997 to remain competitive with peer intuitions' faculty salaries (Andrews, 1997).

Also part of the improvement to the student experience was the upgrade to athletics in 1999. One administrator described the importance of athletics to the overall college experience:

I do think it was important...it does give the students a kind of experience; I think it is very significant, especially for males. I think it is significant for females as well but I think students today have a view of college where they are going to some major athletic events, and you are playing some well known teams. They are very mobile and certainly they communicate across campus about athletics. (Subject Jones)

Of course it is part of the experience. I think students come here and they want to tailgate and they want to be a part of the football games at the Stadium. I understand it isn't the same as the big schools, but it is ours and I think the students are starting to appreciate it. (Subject Tower)

### *College athletics environment*

**Theme: Many higher education institutions place heavy emphasis on intercollegiate athletics in hopes of gaining public recognition.**

#### *Prior to the reclassification to Division I.*

As discussed early the college athletics environment had exploded in the 1980's, at a time when Elon College was winning national championships in football, tennis, and golf. The exposure for Elon however was limited to mostly local and regional attention because the athletic program was a member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), and not the more powerful and prestigious National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

During the 1980's the NCAA had established itself as the major college athletics organization, overpowering and eliminating the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) for good in 1983 and then welcoming new members from the NAIA throughout the 1980's and 1990's. Much of the strength of the NCAA was due to the large television and sponsorship contracts, revenue which the NAIA and the AIAW could not obtain (Monaghan, 1991). Therefore, in the early 1990's, members of the South Atlantic Conference decided that it would be in their best long term interest to move to the NCAA Division II level because of its ability to help members with their operational expenses (Politi, 1993). From 1988 to 1995, NAIA membership has dropped to 364 institutions from 474, with most departing members joining the NCAA. Membership was leaving the NAIA to the NCAA at such a rapid pace that in 1995 the NCAA temporarily stopped accepting new applications for membership for the next two years (Monaghan, 1995).

*Since the transition: from the NAIA to the NCAA.*

The college athletics environment was not as enthusiastic at the NCAA Division II level as it was to those members that competed at the Division I level, which was considered the best level of athletic competition (Blum, 1994b). Several schools that in one way or another were very similar to Elon, such as UNCG (similar in location), Liberty (similar in athletic aspirations), and Wofford (similar in academic standing), had recently transitioned to Division I. In addition, many of the private schools that Elon wanted to be compared to as peer institutions (Richmond, Wake Forest, Georgetown, and

Duke) had been successful at the Division I level and attained national exposure that Elon was not receiving.

In the 1990's the Division II level had grown to become a no-man's land, as many schools were caught in a division that allows scholarships and has increased expenses but does not get the benefit of national television exposure and other revenues. Elon administration became increasingly dissatisfied with the limited benefits that the Division II membership could provide. The administration felt it was necessary to become part of the college athletics Division I "big-time" environment.

As explained in earlier chapters, the late 1990's into the present has been a time when Division I members have placed a major emphasis on conference affiliation. Over the last decade, schools have increasingly moved from one conference to another in hopes of getting more revenue from the BCS and NCAA men's basketball tournament contracts (Bowl Championship Series, 2005; Fulks 2000). As schools realigned themselves in the more prominent conferences (namely the Big East, ACC, SEC, Big Ten), a domino effect hit the smaller conferences as some of the mid-major athletic powerhouses tried to upgrade to a better conference. Add to the conference jumping was the increased number of schools the reclassifying from lower levels to Division I or reclassifying from Division I-AA to I-A and it becomes apparent that the college athletics structure was in great flux. Elon entered the Division I arena as an independent program, without any conference affiliation. This move required the administration to have great patience during the process for Elon to eventually land in a conference that matches their needs.

### *Process*

#### *The reclassification to Division I*

**Theme: The decisions throughout the process of moving to Division I were vital to the long term success of the athletic program.**

**Theme: Attaining conference affiliation in the Southern Conference was the most important aspect of the move to Division I.**

The following section outlines the process of changing the athletic department from NAIA to NCAA Division I. Along with documenting the “how” of the reclassification, the process section also addresses specific decisions along the way that had long term effects on the constituency. The section is separated into two parts. The first is an examination of the methodical approach taken by Elon administration to transition from NAIA to Division I. The second part examines on-campus constituents, including the role of the alumni, and the role of specific leaders in the process and their ability to influence the function of the faculty during the transition.

The move to Elon’s current position in Division I was described by the administration as a four part process (Appendix L), which for the most part progressed rather smoothly. One administrator stated that, “we had great timing and at times, we were very lucky” (Subject Woods). The first part was the move from NAIA to the NCAA Division II, the second was the move to Division II to Division I independent (no conference affiliation), the next move was a move to the Big South Conference, and the final move was from the Division I Big South Conference to the Division I Southern Conference.

Elon University had been a long standing member in the NAIA, as a member of the South Atlantic Conference, and prior to that as a member of the Carolinas Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. The NAIA was founded in 1940 as the National Association of Intercollegiate Basketball (NAIB), which was a result of the NCAA basketball tournament not providing an opportunity for the small schools to play for a championship. The NAIB became the NAIA in 1952 when the organization expanded beyond basketball. The NAIA was developed as an association for smaller schools, typically with a limited budget, to compete against each other in an equitable environment. By the early 1990's, most of the membership was small, private colleges with enrollments of 3,500 or less (Waggoner, 1989; National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, 2006).

The NAIA over the years developed into an association that committed to high standards of academic achievement, equal opportunities for all student-athletes and a high expectation of ethical behavior, scholarship, sportsmanship and leadership. The NAIA was known for ground-breaking rules and its ability to commit to their policies regardless of public perceptions (National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, 2006). Examples of this include the NAIB becoming the first national organization to offer intercollegiate postseason opportunities to black student-athletes in 1948, then five years later action was taken in 1953 when historically black institutions were voted into membership. In 1980, the NAIA welcomed female programs and created national championships for basketball, cross country, gymnastics, indoor and outdoor track and field, softball, tennis and volleyball (National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, 2006). In 1989, when

much of college athletics was becoming too commercialized, the members of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics voted to set limits on season lengths and the number of contests in all sports. In 1987, the NAIA set minimum academic standards for freshman participation and required athletes to make continual progress toward a degree. At the time, the NAIA had established the most demanding academic standards in college athletics (Lederman, 1989; National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, 2006). In 1991, the NAIA membership voted down a proposal to allow student-athletes to compete in sports programs for five years instead of the current four, which indicated more of an interest in academics than athletics (Monaghan, 1991).

However, the NAIA had limitations as well, which many believed lead to schools departing to the NCAA. Specific limitations included the lack of financial support, such as aiding with team travel and insurance costs, and the organization's firm commitment to long standing values, such as strong academic requirements, not allowing sponsorship from alcohol or tobacco companies, and avoiding Sunday games (Monaghan, 1995). One NAIA administrator in 1995 attempted to sum up the reasoning behind the mass exodus by stating,

Some schools have left because they thought it was to their financial benefit to join the more wealthy organization. Some left because they thought we would fold. Some left when we established more-stringent academic policies. However, the organization will not compromise its key principles in an effort to stem financial losses. (p. B2)

The South Atlantic Conference membership, which at the time consisted of Elon, Wingate, Carson Newman, Catawba, Gardner Webb, Lenoir Rhyne, Mars Hill, and

Presbyterian all voted to apply for membership to the NCAA. The 1993-1994 season was the first season that the Conference received full membership for the NCAA Division II level (Switzer, 2006). However, this move received very little national attention. One subject stated that, "I think really from the NAIA to the beginning of Division II, people across the campus did not see the difference" (Subject Black). Other interviewees commented on the primary move from NAIA to the NCAA Division II level:

I suppose we had to make this move...we were moving forward with everything else. We could have been successful at NAIA, but I am not sure the University would have benefited from staying in the NAIA or at Division II...the way they benefit from the NCAA Division I level. (Subject Woods)

First, we went to NAIA to NCAA Division II – and that wasn't as much of status move as it was a necessity, it was a scheduling, financial move because the NCAA was so accommodating. The NAIA, was, well it just wasn't our crowd...we were moving forward. (Subject Yeti)

But at Elon you are known by the company you keep, and you want to play your peers and you want to play above yourself if at all possible. We were changing, our peer set was changing but the athletic world was changing. At the time, Elon had to make a decision whether to stay into NAIA or not. We were getting increasingly away from the NAIA world, and the NAIA world was shrinking and all moving, and the NCAA was getting larger and larger, it was the game to be in. So we had to make a decision to get into NCAA Division II. (Subject Price)

Elon administrators however, were not content with their stay at Division II.

While the move to Division II worked well for the South Atlantic Conference membership, it could not equal the rapidly changing environment at Elon. In the late 1980's and early 1990's, Elon administrators made a big push to create a top tiered private institution with first class programs (Andrews, 1997; Elon University, 2004;

2006a). As new buildings were being built, more faculty were being hired, an academically higher level of student began applying and coming to campus, and academic programs were improving and getting recognition nationally, the intercollegiate athletic program remained at a level that was inferior to other parts of campus. Over the next four years, Elon would participate in Division II, but almost immediately began developing the plan to move to Division I. Subjects reflected about their stay at the Division II level:

A lot of times people will associate your institution with the schools you play. Now at the time we were members of the South Atlantic Conference, DII, good institutions, but Elon was progressing, academically, to a higher level. (Subject House)

As long as we are playing Montreat, Catawba, and Carson-Newman and the other schools that's where we are going to be pegged, because so much of your publicity is athletics. You do not get academics publicity. So you are sort of pegged there when in an academic way we are really leading that pack. (Subject Price)

We would just dominate Division II. We would win all conferences things in all sports every year. So it is kind of like well there is a bar set against Piedmont, Presbyterian, and Wingate. I think the question became what is our clout? So I think that this was very much about institutions of who we run with. So we began to say we can leave this group. So this is one of those fascinating situations: You can stay in Division II or you can play people who are more like you, which was Division I. (Subject Water)

We envisioned Division I probably 15 years ago. It would have been unrealistic for us to go all the way to Division I. So at the time, Division II was very important to us, but I think most of us had bigger plans. (Subject Yetto)

The other thing about NCAA Division II, once we got into NCAA Division II, there were two things happening there. One is its not, well, it is kind of a no man land, the *action* is still not there. The action is still at the Division I level and the

reputation of the university is changing, changing, changing and we began to perceive ourselves as really different in some fundamental ways from some of the other NCAA Division II colleges and universities (Subject Price)

We had outgrown the other universities we were playing – some our sister institutions at the time – we just had grown larger and had more resources. Among the administration and the Board of Trustees and those people charged with making these types of decisions understood that we had outgrown the others. (Subject Woods)

So I believe that there was some talk that they were going to close the door on people entering Division I and if you don't enter it soon you are not going to enter it. (Subject Price)

Elon also had the option of moving down to Division III and make an effort to establish itself as an elite NCAA Division III program. However, subjects interviewed suggested that moving down in athletics did not fit overall institutional goals at the time:

There was an illusion of Division III, but not a whole lot of discussion about that – we were thinking of an upward plain, and certainly DIII is not upward. Where it did come into play was cost implications but I did enough research on my own to realize that the Division III schools with the same size athletic departments were relatively spending the same kind of money, they were just calling it something else. Uniforms are the same, equipment is the same, squad size basically the same, travel a little different. Scholarships, well they just handle it differently. (Subject Woods)

Well, Division II is kind of a no man's land, you could have made a strong case for Division III but a stronger case for Division I. (Subject Lewis)

Our alums wouldn't stand for that, athletics for our students, alums, and our community is a source of hopeful pride. Dropping to Division III would not be possible. Back to back national champions in anything will run a long time as far as tradition. (Subject Water)

Do you go to Division III? Not with Elon's history...we just came out of winning a national championship, we didn't seem to think that going back to Division III was the right thing. So going forward seemed to be the best option. Our three alternatives: go back to Division III, do nothing, or go forward to Division I. Out of the three alternatives, it seemed this [going Division I] had the most upside and the least downside. But everything about Elon was moving in that direction and not moving in the other direction. I can remember there being some discussion about we should just go to Division III, I think that was the faculty sentiment, why don't we just play Division III, but it was too far from Elon's culture. Elon, larger and more dynamic always moving in that up direction, not elite. (Subject Price)

I don't know what would have happened if we stayed in Division II or went to Division III... that is really hard to say...what kind of impact we would have had. But if I ask you who won the Division III football championship I bet you don't know. I would guess there is an exposure, marketing issue to all of this. (Subject House)

With discussion of the possible option of Division III, some administrators made comparisons to a neighboring school, Guilford College, a school that decided to move from NAIA to Division III.

Elon was really kind of struggling financially; I even heard the Division III words. There was a time when our faculty wanted to emulate Guilford. You know - the grass is always greener. But you know someone told me that at Guilford, their faculty say 'well we need to study Elon because they are doing it right'. I find that interesting. (Subject Black)

Guilford was NAIA and they had some good basketball. Karl Kaufman and Roy Friedman, and they had some good teams and they went the opposite way. I would often question that decision. It is just different, Division III. (Subject Frank)

On June 17, 1996, Elon officials decided to elevate their athletic program from NCAA Division II to NCAA Division I. In 1997, their first season in Division I, Elon

participated in all sports without conference affiliation. Transitioning to Division I without conference affiliation is a dangerous move in the process for many reasons; perhaps the most important are the lack of a reliable conference schedule and the NCAA revenue sharing plan.

Elon would spend two years as a Division I independent, all while examining three conferences that would seem to fit Elon's needs: The Big South Conference, Trans-Atlantic Conference, and the Southern Conference. The best fit was the Southern Conference, mainly due to their long standing history of athletic success, good academic institutions, and perhaps most importantly, it was one of the best Division I-AA football conferences (Harper, 1996). However, at the time, the Southern Conference was not accepting additional members. The commissioner of the Southern Conference at the time would say, "We're very comfortable with where we are and who we are. Elon is a fine institution. We're certainly willing to encourage them as they move into Division I, but 12 members is pretty much all we need. I would not see us expanding" (Harper, 1996, p.C1).

In April of 1997, Elon College was accepted as a member of the Big South Conference, ironically after neighboring UNCG left the Big South to enter the Southern Conference. Elon would become a provisional member of the Big South in 1998 and then compete in all sports except football and start play as a full member in 1999. The football team would remain in the Division I-AA level as an independent program and have no conference affiliation. Elon would participate in conference play but not be eligible for the basketball championships for the first two years in the Big South. At the

time Elon joined, the Big South Conference consisted of: Charleston Southern, Coastal Carolina, Liberty, Maryland-Baltimore County (which had decided to leave the Big South in 1998), UNC Asheville, UNC Greensboro (which was leaving later that year), Radford, and Winthrop (Parrish, 1997). The membership into the Big South was a necessity for Elon because the administration felt that surviving as an independent at Division I would not have been successful:

The scheduling – the first year of the two year period we had 4 home basketball games...it is impossible. How do you recruit kids with 4 home games? And we cant develop rivalries, play for any type of championship, get people excited, it is just impossible...So the Big South afford us to have the conference affiliation. And the Big South is a class organization. They do things very well. (Subject House)

Although the Conference and its membership was not a perfect fit for the long term goals of Elon, they would stay in the Big South Conference from 1999-2002 (Big South Conference, 2006). During this time, Elon would continue to gain a reputation as one of the best Southern private schools, gaining popularity with potential students, new faculty, and rejuvenated alumni (Andrews, 1997; Keller, 2004). From an athletic point of view, Elon football would have the first impact on improving the athletic reputation.

In 1999 the football program, as an independent, would have a very successful season, finishing 9-2 and ranked in the Division I-AA USA Today Top 25 (Michael, 1999). Elon, similar to other years in the 1990's, just narrowly missed out on the playoffs. The immediate success strengthened the administration's feelings that the football program could generate interest and bring attention to the athletic department and

the institution. However, the Big South, at the time, did not have football playing members, so Elon greatest strength was the Big South Conference's largest weakness.

In my own mind, the Southern Conference was going to be the best fit for us. Nothing against the Big South and those schools, but they didn't have football at the time, they were putting something together, and to operate at the Division I-AA level with football, without a conference, well you just don't know how difficult that is. If you are an independent out there and trying to get a schedule from scratch, well you just don't know how difficult that is. (Subject Woods)

In 2002, the Big South would begin playing football, however only three members actually played football – Charleston Southern and Liberty, along with Elon. Coastal Carolina had committed to starting a football program but it would not be ready for competition until 2003. Elon would only play one year in the newly formed football conference, opting for a more established football conference (Big South Conference, 2006).

On May 31, 2002, Elon officially accepted an invitation to join the Southern Conference. The move, which went into effect July 1, 2003, would allow Elon to become a full member of the Conference, including football beginning in the 2003-2004 academic year. "Elon's move to the Southern Conference is the next logical step in the evolution of an athletics program that is destined to be among the best in the South," one Elon administrator said. "In every important respect—academically, geographically and athletically—the fit of Elon University and the Southern Conference is perfect" (Donohue, 2002, p. 12).

The process of moving to the more reputable Southern Conference from the Big South was very important to administrators at Elon. One administrator would state “in

fact out all the moves we have made, you know moving from NAIA to Division II, then to I, and now...I would say this is the most significant of all the moves” (Subject Yetto). To understand how important Elon officials believed it was to move conferences, one only has to look at the financial commitment necessary to move.

According to Big South bylaws, in order to leave the Big South prior to a two year notice, which Elon did not give, it would cost a school a \$100,000 penalty. In addition, to join the Southern Conference, Elon administrators would have to be willing to pay the league \$200,000 immediately and \$100,000 a year for each of the following three years (Daniels, 2003). A closer examination of the move to the Southern Conference revealed the important roles played by influential constituents during the move.

#### *Constituency Role in the Process*

**Theme: Faculty acceptance, alumni support, and the influence of the Elon leadership throughout the process were essential to the fluidity of the process of moving to Division I.**

#### *The role of the faculty.*

First, the on campus constituency of Elon appeared to be supportive of the move. Subjects speculated that the support was due to the timing of the move to Division I. Each part of the reclassification process had always come after other priorities on campus were already met, particularly major academic needs. Administrators spoke at great length about not just the process of moving to Division I, but the process of change at the institution. Administrators felt that the timing of the move was ideal because faculty and

staff were on board as long as other priorities on campus were being met, including faculty salaries. Andrews (1997) noted that Elon was doing a better job of attracting better professors because the school was spending more money hiring and retaining qualified faculty. Administrators felt that because the faculty was pleased with the changes made to the institution, the resistance to help athletics was lessened:

They (the faculty) understood what we were trying to do. We were trying to improve our status with strong academic institutions, and most faculty understood that. But, without them understanding that – this move would have been difficult. We stressed that the move would enhance, or at the very least not hurt, academics. (Subject Yetto)

One administrator said, “They understood the idea that we have improved other areas, it would only make sense, now, to improve the athletics program (Subject Frank).

*The role of alumni.*

Alumni also seemed to be heavily supportive during and after the process, especially once the move to the Southern Conference was possible. The \$500,000 membership fees associated with the move to the Southern Conference was reportedly paid for by an alumnus who wished to remain anonymous (Daniels, 2002). In addition, the Phoenix Club donations steadily increased since joining Division I, an indication that the alumni have been a major factor in the success of intercollegiate athletics at Elon. The most significant gift thus far in the Division I era has been the \$2 million gift by Board of Trustees member, Warren “Dusty” Rhodes, for naming rights to help complete the new football stadium (Keech, 1999). Interestingly enough the success of athletic fundraising appears not to have come at the expense of other initiatives at Elon. In 2005-2006, Elon received over \$13.5 million in gifts, which was the largest annual collection

in the university's history (Hagigh, 2006). Since 2000, athletic contributions to the Phoenix Club has seen a 300 percent increase in annual contributions, increased endowed athletic scholarships in excess of 40 and doubled Phoenix Club membership (Elon University Athletic Department, 2006b). Overall, alumni have become more active in giving to the institution and supporting the athletic department. One administrator provided an analysis of the success by providing specific numbers, "In 2000 the Elon Athletic Fund was raising \$150,000 annually for athletics budget needs. Today, in 2006, the Phoenix Club is on pace to raise \$640,000 for annual scholarships, \$500,000 for endowment and another \$400,000 in capital" (Subject Scape). Administrators spoke of the alumni's role in the reclassification and the increased trend of giving to the athletic programs:

We made this move, our alumni our supporters, they recognized that we need more and they have stepped to the plate, much better than what they used to do. But, it was in response to what we were doing too – Elon stepped to the plate too! (Subject Yetto)

There are a lot more people who are giving more money to athletics than when we were in NAIA. I think it has created a much bigger interest. One of the things that we have done is create the Elon Athletics Foundation and they were in charge of trying to raise some money for athletics. And just this past year we have taken two trustees and put them on that athletics board. By doing that it is saying we have got to raise more money for athletics - before there were no trustees. They were good old people who liked our athletic program. But now one of them was the person who was the past chairman on the Board of Trustees, who is now leading the charges and they changed it from the Elon Athletics Foundation to the Phoenix Club to let people know exactly what it is. And then there is another person who was past Chair of the Trustees at East Carolina, and he saw we that did with their program in the late 60's until where they are now. So those are two people I think will make all the difference in the world in trying to raise a \$1,000,000 a year in athletics instead of \$500,000. (Subject Tower)

The alumni were so important to this because we were asking them to change with *everything* that we were trying to do. We really heard strong from our constituents about the importance of athletics especially to alumni and parents. Athletics is a way is a means by which the school is represented to our many constituents in a manner that is highly valued, particularly for alumni. (Subject Price)

Second, the Southern Conference membership fit nicely into Elon's institutional marketing plan. Elon University had done many things to change the perception and image of its campus. Along with many physical changes, Elon improved its academic and athletic programs and institutional status by gaining membership into associations, such as accreditation agencies and athletic conferences. The administration felt that these groupings were a compliment to the University based on the thinking that Elon joins a select, perhaps prestigious category of institutions. Administrators repeatedly stated the process of moving the athletic program was based on the philosophy "that people judge you based on the company you keep" (Subjects Frank, Water, Woods, Jones, Yetto). Similar to accreditation boards establishing standards in academics, so too is Division I membership in athletics; thus, becoming a member of the more prestigious Southern Conference was thought to be a great benefit to the University.

Administration has judged the move to the Southern Conference as one of the most important parts of the reclassification process because it allowed them to meet the major objective of the move, which was to be associated with a higher caliber of peer institutions. In reexamining the steps to get into the Southern Conference, administrators addressed many issues that had to be resolved. One administrator traced the process of

getting into the Southern Conference as one that started years earlier with a combination of variables, including the building of the new, on-campus football stadium:

You know – we really had to get the football stadium for all this to go forward. The current President saw an opportunity – once that stadium went up – he worked to get into the Southern Conference. And don't forget we moved from 60<sup>th</sup> to the top ten in the US News & World Report, had we not had distinction, had those SAT scores not gone up to a range that was higher than Appalachian, including the Furman's, Davidson's... had the faculty not been publishing books that the faculty at the other schools knew about, had they not been going to conferences and being credible...you see none of this would have happened. When the Southern Conference voted us in – you know this is one of the finest academic endorsements this institution has received – when Furman and Davidson are giving you a vote of approval. That was an academic thing...it was an institutional validation. (Subject Yetto)

Another administrator spoke at great length about the opportunity to get into the Southern Conference. Including thoughts on the process of engaging administrators at Southern Conference schools and educating them on the “new” Elon.

There is the element of luck in all of this. Who knew that VMI was going to deemphasize football and get out of the Southern Conference? And there was Davidson and Furman in the Southern Conference., sitting there...institutions that were more like us, in a long, established, historic, prestigious league with football, which was so important to our athletic and institutional history. And then we went about it the right way. We sent each institution some information and then the President and myself and got into a car and went and visited each institution with and met with their president and their athletic director...and this worked because we were dealing with people that had never been on our campus, did not really know about the progress that had been made, had no idea what was going on. And once they got on campus, all of the sudden the light went off, and they were saying to themselves this is a pretty good institution. It was the most productive part of the process – going out and visiting each institution and selling Elon...telling our story. (Subject Woods)

*The role of Elon leadership.*

The role of the Elon leadership was very important to the process of moving from NAIA to the NCAA, then from the Division II level to the Division I-AA level. The decision to move the athletic program at Elon was a decision made by only top level administrators and the Board of Trustees, although one administrator stated, that “many people were consulted” (Subject Frank). Many administrators felt that because of the work of four particular leaders, (the previous president, the current president, the provost, and the athletic director), the move to Division I progressed very smoothly and without many problems. Administrators spoke specifically about those four leaders and their development of long-term relationships with the Board, the faculty, and alumni as extremely important to the process. One subject specifically spoke of their ability to develop trust over their tenure, mostly based on past decisions that thus far have been successful.

The decision to move to Division I was not voted upon by the faculty. It was voted on only by the Board of Trustees. So we did not go to the faculty and say can we do this, we did not go to the public and say can we do this? It was part of our institutional decision, we talked with the Faculty Athletic Committee and they said not a bad idea, we talked with different constituencies, and we would kind of leak things out all over and talking about this and we never got any down side. The trustees took that step, so we never really got any flack over this. You know what? I think part of this is we talked to everyone about it, and the other thing is the last twenty years of the institution have been pretty successful. So no one was questioning it, and so there was a lot of trust in it. It is the same thing as our law school, a big piece of that is because there was just a lot of trust. Now once we screw up...(Subject Frank)

Other subjects discussed the roles of the former president, the athletic director, the provost and the Board, all as vital to the process.

The Athletic Director was so important to the process because he was just a good leader, a recognizable face...he was the primary focus...he represented us to the Board, to the alumni, to all our constituencies. (Subject House)

We were so underfinanced...and you know that may have helped a little because we had to make small slow moves because we were so underfinanced. Leadership in athletics has been so important. Both the AD and the Provost, so important – they were vital to the plan. The most critical factor is the leadership. You need a pretty stable and solid athletic board to communicate with, who could accept what we wanted to do, and help with the move. (Subject Yetto)

The former President was still a good leader and we were grateful to have him, but his vision was so grand...maybe too big for some. His idea was we want to be well known publicly and his goal was up and down the east coast, he wanted us to be known as a very good college up and down the east coast therefore he wanted new parking lots and new green grass and new buildings. He wanted the campus to be important. Athletics- you know, I think he was the one who really fostered that movement to NCAA and to Division I. It really fit with his vision. I'm not sure, the argument was what was best for our athletes, and I guess that really was not the bottom line, the bottom line was what was best for Elon? (Subject Black)

We had an absolutely wonderful Board...they did not operate, they were pretty much a corporate board but they held me accountable. They didn't care much about how it was done...they just wanted it done. They were great consultants, friends, associates, we worked together. Exceedingly ambitious, perhaps unrealistically ambitious; but, you know what, most times they turned out to be right. In 30 years we did what they wanted done in ten, their timing wasn't realistic. (Subject Yetto)

The Athletic Director, the Provost – don't underestimate their presence in all of this...and the President of course. It was athletics and we wanted to start a law school. The Board was not only supportive, but most of the time it was pushing this – get it done, find the money. Let's get into athletics, let's raise the SAT scores, we had a very aggressive board. Not a resistance, with the exception of how are we going to finance all of this. (Subject Yetto)

You are always worried about ethical problems and recruiting scandals and that entire sort of stuff. Our move was graced by having \_\_\_\_\_ as our Athletic Director, no NCAA violations of any sort in his entire career, and that is a source of support and an underpinning for a move of that sort would be absolutely necessary. Because when you go to Division I, you can have some coaches or a booster club or whatever go, 'Oh we are playing Ohio State, we need to do all of these things. So what if we go over the line a little bit, no one will catch us to support this move.' That has not happened here. We have a lot of people who worked very hard and very smartly and had a lot enthusiasm and creativity on the campus all contributing. (Subject Water)

The Provost - an old fashioned ball player from Appalachian, he is a very practical guy and very smart math major, and he is the one that I think more than anyone else that orchestrated this whole process, really because of his position...he orchestrated both sides to come together. A lot of people on this campus think he is the one who orchestrated this whole thing, and he is the one who said we got to go, plus he attracted highly qualified students, for campus and athletics...If I had been in charge I wouldn't have moved and it would have been a mistake because it should have been done. I think early on in the conversation I said I am more of a traditionalist and I just do not like change. We would still be in the NAIA winning the golf championship, the tennis championship, the football championship and things like that. So I say I would not have done it but I would have been dead wrong and that is why I am not in charge. (Subject Tower)

And that says a lot because it crosses over that boundary...don't think I don't know what goes on in athletics I have been through it, so I have my own credibility on that part and I am an avid supporter of the athletic program but at the same time we have some pretty good students. And I say this - but remember our athletic director played football at Wake Forest, I played basketball at Appalachian - and what those athletic programs are about where we came from not where professional athletes came from. It is those things that you learn during football that make him the recruiter and I think that characteristic, the fact that I have done that and the fact that I represent the academic piece of it I think I have a good gauge on it. (Subject Frank)

It was also the leadership that helped ease any potential concerns coming from the faculty. Administrators suggested that the faculty were the only group that raised any concerns about the transition to Division I. However, the questions raised were

addressed and did not create any apprehension among the administration and the Board of Trustees, who made the final decision to move to Division I. Those interviewed discussed the role of the faculty as very restricted; limited mainly to the Faculty Advisory Committee:

The Faculty Advisory Committee was a big part of the discussion. And they were conservative but they were on board with the move, especially as they gained more information about the move. I can't remember any one objecting – especially the move to the Southern Conference... We had a good relationship with the faculty. Alan and Gerry had enormous trust with the group. I am sure we had some opposition, but we never had 'A this is all wrong' moment. We had such a strong interest on campus with student involvement and this was another aspect of creating better student involvement. I think the faculty understood that. (Subject Yetto)

The faculty is always against change but that is when the trust thing comes in. Trust and good communication is how you do it, just like business. So I think a lot of it is touching base with your constituents – we did that. (Subject Frank)

It was an administrative aspect decision; I think the same thing was true from when we went AIWA women's athletics to NAIA committee to NCAA. I think that is an administrative decision; and we have the Faculty Athletics Committee, but I am not sure how they were really involved with the major decisions. But, if we depended on faculty to make a number of these decisions, well, first of all we would have thought about it for years. The other thing, the move to Division I, they would have never have done that. Somebody has got to make those decisions, that is why they get paid those big bucks and that is why they are there. (Subject Black)

Some faculty said I thought we were trying to be a better academic institution, why don't we go to Division III? Why don't we take all this money, we wanted financial security and we don't really worry about this now. Twenty years ago we did worry about financial concerns, so they were thinking how about Division III. So there were forums about this now, there was a lot of question about it and I think another was just fear of the move. (Subject Jones)

I would say there is obviously some, and particularly from the faculty, but I would say that we are very fortunate to have that at a real minimum. I told you that when we were discussing the white paper that there was real interest in discussing athletics except for one, but you know we have got so many great support systems in place here. (Subject Lewis)

I think faculty were involved somewhat with the conversation but at the end of the day – it is an administrative decision. Some faculty frankly understand what it means to be Division I. We do have some previous faculty come from bigger programs; we have pretty good faculty support from our faculty. They come to the games, come to the football games. You have to remember, our faculty still become very close to the students, including the student-athletes. Our faculty supports many of the student activities on campus because we *know* the students. (Subject Frank)

The new President came aboard in 1999 and brought with him a similar drive to see athletics move to the highest possible level. It was during his first 3 years as president that the football stadium was completed and an opportunity for Elon to move to the Southern Conference occurred. According to those interviewed, the new President worked quickly to take advantage of the opportunity to join the more prestigious Conference.

I do not think a president can let any program in the university fall below certain thresholds of quality if that happens you might as well just get rid of the program. So I think it is very important to me that athletics at Elon continue to be on the same upward trajectory that is consistent with the institution as a whole. (Subject Lewis)

The previous President had been a good, strong leader for us to be more visible. I think the current President wants us to be sure we have a good foundation for everything we do – you know if we can't do it well, then we won't do it. Designations are important to him and that is how we are gaining visibility; and not just athletics. He wants us to become a Phi Beta Kappa status institution, which has basically gotten support on campus. (Subject Black)

Ethics are fundamental, you do not change that. Leadership at Elon has carried a consistent belief about ethics. Other places you open up the newspaper and see the problems that exist, another institution may need to think about that and gain a control of that in a purposeful way. We had control of that because we had, and still have, a sound, fundamental ethical base - so this was not going to be an issue. We said as we moved along to all of our people that we will take our lumps in wins and losses here and there but we will come out in a better place. We will do it the right way. (Subject Water)

### *Content*

#### *The change of the institution*

**Theme: The University and its constituency changed considerably over the last two decades. However, nearly all of the changes on campus, including changes to many of the constituency groups, are a result of the strategic change to improve the institution's profile over the last two decades.**

There is no question that since 1993 when Elon moved from the NAIA to NCAA Division II, the school has changed considerably. Even when condensing the time frame and considering the move from NCAA Division II to Division I in 1997, administrators also admit that much has changed during that time. However, most administrators believe that many of the changes were already completed or in the process of taking place before athletics made the transition to Division I, or prior to Division II. Administrators cited most the administrative decision of developing a new strategic plan in the late 1970's and implementing the plan through the 1980's to the present, as the most influential organizational change. Since Elon changed the way it recruited and the type of student it recruited, the institution evolved into its current state. As one subject stated:

Our former President had a vision about increasing quality at every level at Elon. So yes that is always been a part of the fabric, continuous quality improvement has always been a part of the fabric of the Elon I know, since 1978 (Subject Price)

Elon has committed to recruiting and retaining good students from middle to high income families and offering them the best student experience. Since that philosophical change, not when athletics reclassified, Elon has seen steady improvements in the academic qualifications of its student body, a more appealing campus, stronger academic programs, and a more generous constituency base. Most administrators stated that Division I athletics have helped promote the changes on campus, but athletics as one administrator claims, “has been there, just going along for the ride” (Subject Tower).

Therefore, it would be premature to suggest that many of the University’s constituencies, particularly students, faculty, and alumni have changed as a result of the Division I change. It is still important to document comments made about specific areas in relation to the Division I transition for two reasons: one, some administrators did not rule out that the athletic change could have an impact, but they could not determine the level of the impact, and two, researchers may see a more dramatic relationship between the reclassification and campus changes in the future.

The content section begins by documenting changes to two groups – the student body, and the alumni. Administrators discussed each group and felt that a change had taken place but each interviewee felt that the change to the student body and alumni may have been influence by athletics, however, the change was not a direct result of the move to Division I. Some subjects suggested that the students *may* have selected Elon because

of the Division I athletics, or the environment created by Division I athletics. But felt because there were other academic changes, athletics was not the sole factor for the change in the student body.

Similar to the student body, subjects felt that the alumni and the external community have changed considerably, and felt that athletics may have been responsible for some of that change. But once again, due the numerous changes to the institution, subjects could not determine the level of credit the reclassification deserves for such a change.

Another constituent group – the faculty – was discussed with more confidence. Most subjects believed that the faculty has changed, but that the change was not a result of athletics; other factors would have a stronger influence on any change to the faculty.

This section further examines changes that many administrators felt have occurred but differed in their opinion of the magnitude of change, such as the importance of winning in athletics, and the change in the institutional philosophy. Subjects could not agree on the level of importance placed on winning now as opposed to the NAIA or Division II days, nor on the change in the institutional philosophy and whether or not that was a result of the transition to Division I.

The content section ends with an examination of areas that have changed at Elon as a result of the move to Division I. Administrators discussed the change in the athletic product, the student-athlete, the coaches, the mascot, improved peer associations, and the facilities.

*The change in the student body*

**Theme: The student body may have been indirectly impacted by the reclassification of the athletic department.**

The student body has been completely transformed over the last two decades as Elon moved from a regional recruiting philosophy to a national and international recruiting and marketing plan. During the early 1980's Elon was admitting students with an average GPA between 2.0-2.5 and with SAT scores between 750-1000, mainly from North Carolina and Virginia (Keller, 2004). The average high school GPA in 1994 rose to 2.97 and only 21 percent of the student body was from North Carolina (Newsom, 2004).

Examining the student body profile before the move to Division I (1987-1997) and then since the move to Division I (1997-present) would suggest that those trends have continued. Students are increasingly smarter (based on higher SAT scores of students admitted), more diverse (based on race, religion, and permanent residence), and have a higher retention rate than the student body of the early 1990's. Although these upward trends started before the move to Division I in 1997, some categories have increased at a quicker rate since the reclassification.

For example, Elon's minority student population has improved from 6.6% of the total population in 1991, to 7.6% in 1997, and then a larger jump to 9.4% in 2006. North Carolina has remained the state where Elon draws its largest number of students (in 2006-07, 33% of the students are from North Carolina), however Elon drew students in 2006-2007 from 46 different states. Perhaps a more telling number is that Elon has moved beyond attracting the local student as Elon has lowered the number of students enrolled

from Alamance County from 29.8% (1998) to 14.4% (2006-2007) (Elon University, 2007).

Since 1997, Elon has seen more Catholic, Episcopalian, Jewish, Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian students enter the institution. Also, students that reported they have no religious preference have also increased considerably from 885 (1997-1998) to 1,512 (2006-2007). Elon's affiliated religion, the United Church of Christ (UCC), has increased in the first four years of Division I, but took a dramatic downturn in 2000-2001, the same year the school changed the nickname from Fighting Christians to Phoenix. In 2000-2001, UCC representation went from 6.1% of the student population to 1.5% by 2006-2007 (Elon University, 2007).

Elon had seen a slight increase in the number of student applications from 1991 (3,313) to 1996 (4,504), but has seen a larger increase in student applications since 1997-98 (5,100) to 2006-07 (9,204). Academically, Elon had seen a slight increase in freshman SAT scores in the six years prior to the move to Division I (1030 in 1991 to 1058 in 1996), however freshman SAT scores have increased considerably from 1078 (1997-98) to 1217 (2006-07). The average grade point average (GPA) of Elon students has increased from 2.86 (1997) to 3.12 (2006), however, the average GPA of Elon students was increasing prior to the move to Division I (in 1991 the average GPA was 2.67) (Elon University, 2007).

Administrators spoke about the changes to the Elon student body over the last two decades and also about the relationship between the changes of the student body to the reclassification of the athletic program to Division I.

We have got 9,150 applications next year (2005-2006) for 1250 people in the freshman class. This is the second year in a row that the SAT's mean are going to be above 1200. How much has Division I athletics helped that? I think that it is one of many factors, but it is not *the* factor. There is visibility with athletics that college students want and I think that it helps, but we have so much more to offer than just Division I athletics. (Subject Price)

I think for the most part, academically, we have better students. In the early years I think our students although they struggled academically they were willing to struggle. Character wise, I think the character is the same, I mean real character...you know we had some bad character kids then and we get some now....but for the most part, we have good kids. (Subject Black)

Yes our students have changed academically; there has been a significant increase in SAT score. (Subject Tower)

Yes our students are different, because we recruit differently. Our students that come to Elon are based on a bigger institutional plan. We are a day by day cost operator institution and tuition pays the bills. We recruit students that can pay the bills. I don't know what the average income is for our students but the number is very high, which is different than our student body of the 1970's and early 1980's. (Subject Black)

Our students have changed and I think athletics has helped with that change. I do think it gives you a kind of experience, I think it is very significant for males. I think it is significant for females as well but I think students today have a view of college where they are going to some major athletic events, and you are playing some well known teams. Students today are very mobile and certainly they communicate across campus, and to their friends at other campuses about their college experience and I think athletic contests are a part of that. (Subject Jones)

Well, I see something new, which is now sort of coming forward – institutional pride. I think students are proud of their institution. The same way they are proud of the institution for all the other things that are going on. They are just ready for some wins. The basketball teams run here (in 2005-2006) was evident of that, sold out, students can not get in. (Subject Water)

Yes, our students have changed, but I do not know which one of these changes you would tie it to; we have the change from college to university, the move to Division I, the changes to the campus buildings, the changes to our academic programs. One that was big was the change from college to university – we noticed a big change – you definitely notice a 25% increase in applications right away. We couldn't do enough. You can't add enough group sessions and you don't have enough parking spaces and you know the size. You have huge turnouts for open houses and those sorts of things. So that certainly does have a feel, last year we had a 39 point increase in SAT scores. I think we noticed that. We have had steady 10-15 point increases in the SAT's until last year. You notice the difference and I think some of the credit needs to go to the visibility of a Division I athletic program...And the students, you know more people kept applying. It is not like we set out to say you know are students are the pits we need to raise the SAT average, we should quit accepting them! I guess there were always talks of that, just quit accepting them. But, we took a different approach. We were always much more practical. Our former President used to tell us that if we could do our best job, then our best recruiter would be a satisfied student. If we make these students, if we do our best job educating these students then more students will come to Elon. They will say what a wonderful place it is, their parents will say it is a wonderful place, and more students will come to Elon. Elon will get more selective, and that is exactly the way it happened. (Subject Price)

I have seen the students change just because the school has changed. We used to serve great kids, and we serve great kids now but it is a different atmosphere. Not that one is any better than the other. (Subject Frank)

### *The change in alumni*

**Theme: The alumni have become more active in their support of Elon, however it was difficult to determine how much of the change was due to the reclassification of athletics to Division I.**

As discussed in the process section, the alumni have become actively involved in athletics. Giving to the athletic program has continued to rise since becoming Division I;

however, data suggest that the move to Division I may not be the only reason for the increased involvement of the alumni. One administrator stated:

Our alumni are still adjusting to a lot of change. It was leaving the Fighting Christians, the change to the university, going to Division I, and becoming so big, so quick. Those are decisions that were made fairly close in proximity. People have a hard time taking any change, and that much change – it can be hard. Things needed to be changed; in the long history of the university, I think these changes will be viewed as positive, and inevitable. So far the alumni have been very supportive. (Subject Price)

I am sure athletics has helped the change. But I think if you asked people in development, they would tell you that they are responsible for the increased support – they are doing more...they should get some of the credit. So should all of the other departments and programs on campus. The institution is changing for the better...I would think alumni like that, including athletics. (Subject Yetto)

Subjects discussed the change in alumni support as a result of a larger alumni pool, wealthier families, and institutional changes, including but not limited to the athletics change. Also, research showed that the fundraising efforts at Elon have become more sophisticated, as more employees have been hired to cultivate alumni and solicit funding. One subject indicated that:

A large portion of our alumni graduated within the last 10-20 years. These are young people starting families, they aren't the ones who can give big money, down the road they could be. Much of our support now comes from the community. Fundraising is challenging at Elon because the alumni are not wealthy – not yet. That will be true for the next decade or so. Our young alumni will have much more giving capacity than our old alumni now. There are many more of them for one thing. So it is now a challenge to keep them involved and stay a part of our community. That is a process that we have developed over the last decade...it is very important to our future success. (Subject Price)

Research found that in fact the majority of Elon's alumni are still relatively young with close to 65% graduating within the last 25 years (Elon University, 2007). Some of these alumni are beginning to be in a position to give back to Elon.

The athletic program however, has been described by the interviewees as a source of pride for alumni. As giving has increased considerably since moving to Division I, it appears more alumni are giving back directly to the athletics program. It should be noted that the Elon athletics fund moved to a premium seating program, which ties donations into improved seat location at home games. If donors would like to have the best possible seats for football and basketball games, they will give more. When Rhodes Stadium was built in 2001, the University set aside 1,000 of the best seats for season-ticket buyers who also committed to donating \$2,500 a seat over five years to the athletics fund, which by 2004 had sold more than 650 such seats (Blum, 2004).

While taking all of these factors into account, administrators still felt strongly that a Division I athletics program does impact the alumni base, mostly in a very positive way.

#### *The change in faculty*

**Theme: The faculty have changed at Elon, however, the change was not a result of the reclassification to Division I.**

In a 2004 article in the *Greensboro News & Record*, the Elon Provost stated: Twenty years ago, I would have told you that our faculty are great teachers. Twelve years ago, I would have told you they are great teachers and actively engaged in their profession. Today, I would say our faculty are great teachers and great scholars. (Newsom, 2004, p, B1)

Administrators also discussed the move to Division I on the change to the faculty and shared similar feelings to the 2004 quote from the Provost. Most interviewed felt that the change has been substantial over the last two decades, however, the move to Division I was not a factor in the change. Most recently, Keller (2004) wrote that the faculty at Elon have changed considerably, hiring sixty new faculty between 1999-2003, most of whom come in at the assistant professor level and are willing to work under the Elon Teacher-Scholar philosophy. Those interviewed supported Keller's statements:

The bottom line is we find faculty who believe in the teacher-scholar profile that we have established. Why have we seen some changes? First, you have to be a good teacher. That is a must. If you are not a good teacher, a good communicator, if you do not care about the students' well being, you will not survive here. Some faculty do not want to jump into scholarship, some are frankly not good at getting involved. There are a lot of reasons. Does athletics affect that? I am not sure how. (Subject Frank)

Our faculty changed, and not necessarily because they left, but...when they changed from three to the four hour, the faculty had to re-write every single course. So they were really challenged by this they had to redo and change their teaching methods. So this was really innovative and from this I think it just opened up and this allowed us to say what are things we can do that would help students apply outside knowledge they could learn outside the class anyone who was outside the class that could help, so it was going both ways. This led to a whole inspiration of things! (Subject Jones)

The faculty have changed because the institution has changed. We know what we want. We have worked hard to establish what it means to be a faculty member at Elon. (Subject Yetto)

I don't know that is why you might get better faculty or staff at all, it might be an interesting tiebreaker to someone who thinks I could go there I might go to Elon. It might be for some people but I don't think there is anything really there. (Subject Water)

Other administrators suggested that the people have changed, but the job of teaching at Elon really has not:

We have some new faculty, but we also have faculty that have been at Elon for a very long time. We find a match. We try to find faculty that want to get involved. Faculty care about students, they spend a lot more time with students than people at most other institutions, but that has not changed, Elon does not have an elitist attitude and that has not changed. (Subject Price)

Turnover isn't a big deal at Elon, or it hasn't been because the reality is we just bring in another person who believes in the same thing and does the same job, maybe even better. (Subject Yetto)

In addition to discussing if students and faculty have changed since the move to the NCAA Division I-AA level, philosophical themes were also identified which include the importance of winning and institutional values.

*The importance of winning*

**Theme: The importance of winning in athletic competition may not have changed since the reclassification to Division I.**

The importance of winning was discussed during each interview; however, not all administrators felt that winning had become more important in all the sports. Most did agree that the programs have to be competitive, but did not suggest that the move to Division I has meant that winning is now more important than other aspects of the institution, such as academics and ethical operations. However, some did suggest that eventually Elon would need to be competitive.

Part of being Division I is who you play and who you beat too. So I think our institution is known all over now because we have played good teams. I think people are proud to say we played Wake Forest, which was the most upset I have seen students is when we lost to Wake at Greensboro Coliseum. That was a great atmosphere, now we didn't do well, but we were there, that was great at the time they were 15<sup>th</sup> in the nation. At some point for this thing to really grab some attention we need to win. (Subject Jones)

Another administrator suggested that the concept of winning games might actually be less important now because Elon had developed a strong athletic tradition by dominating their conferences and winning NAIA Championships, and winning that easily just will not happen at the NCAA Division I level. He did suggest that winning is important and will continue to grow a quicker rate than other programs

Competing is important now for our programs, except for football. Because in football...well the Southern has won, Appalachian has won the I-AA National Championship. What we have to do is get recruits in and say folks we are going to be playing Clemson this year in basketball, we might play Virginia next year, and there are a lot of kids who will come to Elon who weren't recruited by these schools but think they should have been. They will come here and fight like heck to win all those games, and I think the one thing that moving up has done is we can't compete for a national championship in any sport, except for football, in the foreseeable future. (Subject Tower)

We want to win and have the athletic accolades that we used to have in the NAIA, Division II, the Big South... We have always wanted to win, but win the right way. Now that we are here we want to be in the upper half in all of these sports and have the academic all Americans we have had all along and we want to do well. I don't think that there is any doubt about it, now that you got here what are you going to do, did you come here to be on the bottom rung? Of course not, but we need to understand that we aren't winning national championships like we used to. (Subject Water)

Other administrators suggested that the importance of winning may become more important when and if Elon begins to see the results of winning, such as national publicity and sold out home games.

You know I have noticed at other schools – the more you win, the more people expect you to win, the more important it becomes. Look at our neighbors, Duke, Carolina, State – they fire coaches not because they didn't win, but they didn't win *enough*. We are not there, but I think that is when winning could become a necessity. (Subject Tower)

When we beat Clemson in men's basketball [in 2005-06]...it was a watershed moment, first time we have beaten anybody like that. Not the first time someone in the conference has beaten an ACC school, but pretty big. Winning is a self fulfilling process in many ways. (Subject Water)

Not many of our students are that engaged with the athletics right now, truthfully they are not winning. If they win they will come, as we saw with basketball we started filling it up, it holds about 1500 students. When we win consistently, everyone will get behind us...it will be a tough ticket. (Subject Jones)

### *The change in institutional philosophy*

**Theme: The overall institutional philosophy, as well as the philosophy toward athletics, may have changed; however the depth of the change was difficult to determine.**

The institutional philosophy was built on the founding fathers' vision "of an academic community that transforms mind, body, and spirit and encourages freedom of thought and liberty of conscience" (Elon University, 2006f). Administrators shared their beliefs on whether the increased emphasis on athletics forced the university to compromise their philosophies in any way:

if we can't do it well, then we are not going to. I think that has always been the case, if we thought about something that would be really good for Elon but if we couldn't do it with a top notch program then Elon would not do it. And I think that is a good attitude. Academically, this always comes up in meetings...you know, and there, there are some things that have come up like some graduate programs and we look around and then we say why should we do that? We should concentrate on the undergraduate program...I think athletics falls into that same category, our intentions are do it well, do it the right way. (Subject Black)

The institution has strengthened its values. Our president is very committed to the traditional values and where is it our there – visible for people to see. The institution has grown, it is more complex. We have worked very hard – everyone the administration, the faculty, the board, the coaches – to keep the individual contact. Every student knows his or her professors personally. Every professor knows their students. I mean really we challenge professors to see how many students they can call by first name – it is that important. Other things like College Coffee, where we come together in an informal setting and just talk. I think there is an inordinate attempt to keep that. I think we do a better job now than we have ever done. (Subject Yetto)

I don't think our philosophy of how we do things at Elon has changed. We are still about the people, the students. Maybe we move to quick now. I would like to slow down and enjoy who you are. There is a feeling that you can't do that, because you get caught up with it, you got to be able to move on. The thing that still is important is the small things, such as the faculty student ratio. The fact that the faculty know the students and know them well, mentor them and know who they are in the classroom and call them by their name on campus. And I think the coaches here are like that with their teams...same philosophy. For the most part we are a loving, caring community I think that still exists. (Subject Black)

We are not different, we are better. Better now at engaging the students. Elon provides which I think is very experience based, and I think it is kind of a place that does engage students. Elon has always had this kind of a new feeling; it is how can we better to improve this school? This was about an institution increasingly gaining confidence and people began to take notice. People were saying wow that is a school that is doing something. I think we began to look around and say well who our peers are. (Subject Jones)

Athletics is part of the philosophy. Athletics was very much a part of the cultural history here. I think the fact that the athletic director was a member of the senior

cabinet says a lot...The university today moves real quick. I will tell you that you deal with something when you have to. You don't say lets wait until 2007 to deal with this. You deal with it when you have to deal with it. Having said that, I think that there are core traditions and values at Elon that have not changed and that is a wonderful thing. Even though physically so much has changed, and the caliber of student has changed, and the size has changed. You are tempted to say my gosh everything has changed, but everything has not changed. Elon has a personality and a character that has not changed; we are a very caring place... We have a very egalitarian attitude we are a strong community, and that has not changed. We have these values, we value applied learning, that has not changed. We have a strong sense of social mission and the service learning program has really given that a chance to blossom. We still have that spiritual heritage; we have developed in the last 30 to 40 years maybe longer than most institutions this commitment to international understanding which serves us very well. (Subject Price)

Some aspects of the University have changed due to the reclassification of the athletic department from the NAIA to Division I-AA, namely, the athletic product or teams, the student-athletes, the coaches, the mascot, peer groups based on conference affiliation, and the facilities.

*The athletic product*

**Theme: The athletic product, as well as the student-athlete, the coaches, the mascot, improved peer associations, and the facilities were directly impacted by the reclassification of the athletic department.**

The athletic product has changed as a result of the move to Division I athletics. First, the actual number of teams increased since the 1997 move, women's golf was added in 1997-1998, and the women's indoor track and track and field teams were added in 2001-02. In addition, the move to Division I and the Southern Conference has increased the need for the athletic product to become more of a commodity sold to the public as entertainment. To provide good entertainment, the institution has welcomed

more scholarship student-athletes, full time administrators, coaches, and staff along with better facilities, all of which are similar trends seen at other institutions that have reclassified.

However, the athletic product at Elon currently has gone through a change that is unique because of the athletic department's past success, particularly in football. Subjects, when asked about the change in the athletic product, suggested that the new athletic product may not experience success as easily as it did in the past, and thus, it may not be as entertaining to all the Elon supporters at this point. Building on the early statements that the Elon administrators would not compromise their standards in exchange for winning and creating a better form of entertainment, administrators spoke about the ability to compete. A common phrase that appeared was that Elon athletics had to develop a product, which at this point, was competitive.

I mean before, in the NAIA, I mean every time we lined up we talked about how to win a national championship. You can't ever win a national championship in any sports except for football cause we are in I-AA. The best we can do is to win the conference title, and when we win the conference title in basketball, for example, our first game in the NCAA is against someone like Duke. And besides some miracle – well we are going to have a tough time beating a team like Duke. So our whole new ballgame...it is how do we go about winning the conference. I think winning will come eventually, it will come in spurts. When you see that beautiful stadium, people expect the football team to look as good as the stadium. But, we can't quite make it up. (Subject Tower)

You have to be competitive. Do you have to win national championships? No that could take decades, but you have to be competitive, you have to be competitive in your conference. You can't stay in the bottom in everything you got to move up in some way. You just have to show progress. (Subject Price)

I don't think you have to win championships; you have got to be competitive. You can't sit, it would be a mistake, a disaster to be in the bottom of the conference and get beat by everyone all the time and that is not fair. People would say, 'What are we doing here?' That would be a case of sorry management. If you got us there and you did not give us anything to compete with - that is not fair. That is like sending someone to the battle without guns. (Subject Frank)

I understand the big focus - I think the Board's primary focus was more of an alignment issue with other universities, but I am in the arena and we had to also look at it from a competitive viewpoint. We had been so successful in NAIA and Division II and I had concerned that we try and continue some of that...That was a concern, that is a concern, we had to be competitive. I don't know that winning championships are going to be the measure of this whole thing. I think competitiveness is important, and you know what, we are in our third year in the Southern Conference and we are making strides. Our basketball teams won the division, men's golf finished fourth, women's fifth, tennis finished one, baseball team is very competitive. We had three coaches get coach of the year...we are making strides. A lot of people are not realistic. It takes time! But they are becoming more realistic because they see the nature of the competition. (Subject Woods)

### *The change in the student-athlete*

As stated earlier, the student body went through a tremendous change in the last two decades; however it is difficult to assume those changes were a result of moving the athletic program to a higher standard. One group that appeared to have changed however is the student-athlete. Administrators felt that the student-athlete changed from both the student and athlete perspectives. Similar to the general student body, student-athletes have been recruited more nationally, compared to the regional recruiting base during the NAIA days. One coach anticipated the change, stating:

I think it's given us added exposure because people across the country can relate to the NCAA. If you tell them you're from an NAIA school, if they're not from this area, they may not know what you're talking about. (Politi, 1993, p. 9)

Other administrators felt that the student-athlete had changed considerably over the last two decades due to the increased academic standards at Elon and the NCAA, the increase of grant-in-aids, and the vast recruiting efforts of the Elon coaches to find a qualified student and a talented athlete. One administrator suggested that, “They (student-athletes) are different – bottom line, the athletes now are bigger, stronger” (Subject Frank).

Administrators made the following comments about the changes in the Elon student-athletes:

As a matter of fact when I was here recruiting for football that we got about 48% of our regular students from North Carolina, and now I think it is down to 25%. (Subject Tower)

We get a different quality of student-athlete just as we get a different quality with students; same thing is true for student-athlete. Our admission standards, the NCAA academic standards, they have all gotten harder...so we have a different type of individual that we are recruiting. (Subject Woods)

Well, in the 1970's and some of the 80's - I think that a lot of the young men and women who were coming into an athletic program particularly from the major sports were not coming from a college background; they were first generation college students – maybe even to some extent we still see some of that today. An athletics program does not only give them the money to attend, but it gives the academic support that they need. A lot of times, their parents don't know how to negotiate the system for them. Now, it gives them a chance to have a college education. Elon was basically an open door institution then for students - period. And the NCAA or the NAIA didn't have the performance it has now. Before, I thought some of student-athletes - they had no business being in college to tell you the truth, they really didn't. They were outstanding football players mostly or outstanding basketball, they had an outstanding talent and this was the only place they could exercise that talent. And this allowed them to get a college education. But...I could tell you they are much better off for getting an education. Much better off! They come out as an educated person and they live their life differently from what they do, and now their children are definitely thinking about going to college...Where if they did not have the opportunities, think about it,

generations would never see college as a possibility for them. Now, I have former players coming back to me who are bringing their children here to college. It is incredible, it is wonderful. (Subject Price)

I think athletics has done a very good job continuing to bring in student athletes who can compete with the rising quality of our students and our classroom. We have floor for admissions levels that other schools in our conference do not have, and I will occasionally hear about it from coaches. This kid is going to Western or Appalachian or whatever have you and I say 'Good luck! I wish them great luck there.' It becomes the point of a differential for an athlete at some times. For the most part we have a lot to be proud of and our athletes are on par with our student body as a whole. The graduation rate for our four year and the six year are getting stronger, the APR, the measures which just came out that Elon have all of their sports in compliance with the standards, those are all healthy signs. (Subject Lewis)

We are able with our increase standards that we are able to recruit a more committed student athlete so some one that is here for the right reasons. We recruit against Richmond, JMU, and the privates in the Southern Conference...We do a good job of bring the right kind of kid in here so that he or she will succeed. If they are not going to succeed in the classroom then they aren't going to last. They won't fit into the institution and that does not help anyone, the student, the coach, the program, the university, no one. I think about our parents who are really paying attention to graduation rates now, so we need to find kids that are going to walk across the stage in 4 or 5 years. (Subject House)

One administrator spoke of the increased demands on the student-athlete which the subject felt had a great impact on their Elon experience:

I don't know I sometimes I feel like the athletes are under a little more pressure, both academically and athletically. Academically Elon is not particularly easy; we don't have any easy courses. I think our students feel that pressure. Because Elon has changed and we are more academic, they have to meet those standards and then the pressure is on athletics. I mean, I cannot believe that softball has to practice 9 months of the year and the athletes don't have an off season. So you hire a weight training coach, there is always someone there, trying to draw more out of them. I feel the athletes feel that pressure. That has always been true the higher the student athlete level the more pressure they receive. But I think the

pressure on the athletes themselves is greater than it used to be, at least here at Elon. (Subject Black)

*The change in coaches*

Another area that administrators noticed adjustments due to the Division I status was in the coaching positions. In addition to more coaches, some administrators noticed the differences in coaching responsibilities, specifically coaches that were no longer performing two jobs as a teacher/coach or administrator/coach, but were now specifically assigned to coach. Subjects commented on the increased time commitments devoted to their teams, year round attention to each student-athlete, time spent recruiting, and the added pressure of building a strong Division I program.

Elon was also attracting a different type of coach to the University. It was not uncommon for past coaches to be hired from the local area, whether it was an alumnus, an assistant from a local college, or a successful high school coach. However, recently coaches were coming to Elon from across the nation bringing more experience, particularly Division I coaching experience.

However, some of the changes have not always been positive, including the removal of a popular or talented coach that was not winning, or hiring and retaining an unfavorable coach who was not fitting into the Elon culture. Below are statements made by administrators regarding the changes in the coaching staff.

It is important and some time difficult...we bring coaches into this environment and sometimes it takes awhile for them to learn that they can't impose their culture that they are use to on us, they have adapt to the culture that is here...and that is an important element...quite frankly that is very important. Sometimes it is

more important than wins and losses, in term of effecting coaching changes.  
(Subject Woods)

There is a difference between Division II coaches and Division I coaches, huge difference, and one of the great things I admire about the athletic director is that he had to make a lot of coaching changes while persevering the integrity of the athletic program through this transition. He gave everyone a shot. He bent over backwards but ultimately you have to decide that we are in a new environment here and not everyone is going to be able to make that transition. So we have to look around in our coaching staff and there is this tremendous change of the staff...and that is a key piece of it. Coaches exemplify what we are talking about, they need to buy into everything we do...they need to come in and say we are going to respect Elon's academic values. We need to recruit the right students and they see a big picture. It takes a can do attitude. (Subject Tower)

Things are different now because when I started all of the coaches were teachers. So when a new coach was brought in to be employed I think it hurts, faculty do not know coaches as well because in the early years when they taught they would be at faculty meetings unless there was actual practice time. They would do college coffee be in department meetings and they would interact with people, you know more on the academic side as well. And I think in that time with the NAIA circles there was the feeling then that the coaches then should be part of the teachers, and that is a big change with Division I. They want you to be part of the community, but they want you to be a part of the community so you gain community support, not so you will benefit from being part of a community and I think that is a different factor. (Subject Black)

Essentially I think some people on campus had thought of athletics over here and academics are over here. The athletic director really struggled with that, the problem of personality; He started really looking at who Elon is hiring, particularly coaches. Some coaches make an effort to be known on campus and around town and some don't. They encourage them to show up at college coffee. I think in the hiring process recently they started to look for that and how they would act...you know when you talk about change you also have to talk about the firing process. I think always firing coaches is a blow to an institution, because we are a community minded university, it makes it a harder decision for the Athletic Director for one thing. But I think that the community has fought for coaches who have lost there jobs, one of our women's basketball coaches was one of our graduates, an outstanding student. We greatly admired her but she didn't have a good basketball success here and she had to be let go and that was a tough, tough decision. The community did not react to well to that, but the people who understand athletics understand that is part of the job. (Subject Black)

I would say be careful how you plan for your coaching transition, because I think that is part of the deepest thing we find. They are different...they are higher recruited coaches, from all over the country. I have faculty friends that say on campus, 'What do you mean the women's basketball team has four coaches and they only play 23 games. What do they do the rest of the time?' I think the general population does not understand the life of the Division I coach.  
(Subject Black)

You hate to look at a coach, but wins and losses do come into play in a different way. It has been a very sad situation for athletics to have to endure from NAIA to Division I in a short duration of time. The coaches have to change their whole recruiting base, the types of athletes you would like to come to the institution and the increasing standards, all of those things, really almost all at once. I sure wouldn't want to have been in charge of that during the transition. Because you recruit good solid citizens and student athletes to come to an institution of this academic and athletic quality, they are going to be competing against someone now who is one level higher. Chances are you are going to lose more than you win. It is hard to experience but there is no other way to do it. There is a natural instinct and aspect in all coaches...they did not just come here to be just growers – they want to win too. I don't think they say I want to go to an institution where I can be at the bottom. (Subject Water)

It isn't that our coaches didn't have quality experiences, but they didn't have Division I experiences, so you are going to have some turnover. What you feel bad about is that we went through a period of time when we didn't have any championships to play for and we didn't have a conference affiliation and our players had no honors to achieve and no way for recognition and I think that is hard part about this transition that people overlook sometimes. Our coaches, our teams - they made great sacrifices. I have always been appreciative about that, even sensitive cause we were successful in the past. We had a tough, tough schedule during that time cause we had to play where we could get a game and schools would say to us, we will play you but you have to come out to us...and we might have been able to win some conferences had we gotten in. We were that good. But we had to put our teams, our coaches in a compromising position – making it very difficult to win. (Subject Woods)

### *The change from Fighting Christian to Phoenix*

Similar to the change from college to university, the nickname and mascot change was symbolic of Elon's new and diverse student population. Administrators suggested

that once Elon decided to move to Division I, the timing of a new athletic identity also seemed appropriate. The Board of Trustees released a statement on October 13, 1999 discussing the various reasons why the athletics identity change was appropriate. Among those reasons provided were:

- Elon needed an athletics brand that would symbolically represent the new Division I status.
- The construction of Rhodes Stadium
- The current identity (Fighting Christians) “limits its usefulness to the institution. It is not used in admissions and advancement materials and is used infrequently in the marketing of athletics programs.”
- “A new athletics identity would foster an inclusive atmosphere and ensure that people of all faiths and cultures feel welcome at the college.” (Elon Press Release, 1999)

However, some alumni did not agree with the change. Administrators discussed the identity change and its meaning to Elon’s constituency and in relation to the current environment on campus:

Fighting Christians as a mascot first off was an oxymoron, and second of all it was sort of like dated, kind of a rip-off. Fighting fill in the blank; Irish, there was no distinction. If you look at it, it was never a name we chose, some sports writer called us that it was a game between Elon and Guilford and he said those Fighting Christians over there beat the Quakers or something. (Subject Water)

The move from Fighting Christians to Phoenix was certainly created a lot of stir among alumni, not on campus. I think on campus people were, even students, I think everyone on campus thought this was the right thing to do and the right time to do it. The Phoenix and Fighting Christian probably should have been made

years before that. But it wasn't, it was beginning to be a real PR issue. We were having more and more Jewish students and they were saying, 'what is this?' Fighting Christians? Give me a break. The students they were not proud of that nickname. It belonged to another era when we were the Christian church, and then it made sense. Now unfortunately now it develops a right wing more fundamentalist viewpoint but it does not represent Elon at all. (Subject Price)

The changing from the Fighting Christians, there are still a few people out there a little upset by this. When it first changed... There were a few people, just a group who were upset. They say I am a Fighting Christian I am not a Phoenix, but that was mild, and since we have changed the name, the resistance has gone down every single year. Every now and then we get a letter saying I would give to the Fighting Christians, I am not a Phoenix. (Subject Tower)

I know alums that say 'you can be a Phoenix if you wish I shall always be a Fighting Christian.' On campus I have never seen that, even when we discussed the move away from Fighting Christians. I think there was a sense of this is a time to move beyond from Fighting Christian. First off it is an oxymoron, and really you always have to explain that to people, what do you mean Fighting Christians? And I feel like that most people on the campus at the time thought it was time to move on, we are diverse. I even had one mother say to me when we were in Florida, 'What is your religious association is if you are the Fighting Christians?' It was just time to move on. (Subject Black)

### *The change in peer institutions*

As stated earlier, the key purpose for the move to Division I was to be affiliated with a better group of peer institutions. Elon chose to align itself athletically through the larger brand of Division I membership and their membership into athletic conferences, finally landing in the Southern Conference. The change in peer institutions was dramatic, as Elon was associated with the schools in the South Atlantic Conference through 1996, specifically, Carson-Newman, Catawba, Wingate, Gardner-Webb, Presbyterian, Mars Hill, Newberry, and Lenoir-Rhyne (Switzer, 2006). Then, Elon was linked to the schools in the Big South: Charleston Southern, Coastal Carolina, Liberty, Maryland-Baltimore

County, UNC Asheville (Big South Conference, 2006). Currently, Elon is associated with the member schools of the Southern Conference, particularly the private schools in the conference: Wofford, Davidson, and Furman; in addition to other Southern Conference members University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Appalachian State, The Citadel, Chattanooga, Western Carolina, Georgia Southern, College of Charleston, and East Tennessee State (Southern Conference, 2006). Administrators consistently spoke about the importance of peer association and conference alignment as one of, if not the most important result of the move to Division I:

I don't know that we would say it was a failure if we didn't end up in the Southern Conference, it just would be that it would not yet be finished. This whole process - it takes two to tango, they need to have an opening and you have to be there ready to go in. You can sit 12 years and not find an opening, which is happening to a lot of schools right now. The stars were lined up right and we had done all of our homework and worked the right way so we sort of navigated into port but there was a whole lot of pedaling going on. (Subject Water)

From an athletic standpoint, you can't make the Division I commitment without conference affiliation, it would be impossible. The Southern Conference was where we wanted to be with our football program. The Big South did not afford us the automatic qualifier and the Southern Conference did. And obviously, from the institutional side, those schools in the Southern Conference were really who we wanted to be with. (Subject House)

Elon is a very changing school. We are not an itty bitty school set in our ways and not going to change. I know a lot of those small private colleges that we used to be associated with very well, High Point, Catawba, Lenoir Rhyne, and then you know Elon used to play against East Carolina, Western Carolina, Appalachian. Some of those schools have changed and some of them haven't. Elon has changed - it really has and it will continue to. We just aren't like some of the schools that to this day, are very similar to years ago... The real school I was looking at was Furman, who is in the Southern Conference, and then Richmond, and Wake Forest, who obviously are not. I think of them academically and I think of them athletically. But you know the perfect image of a private school that I think about

is Gonzaga. Anybody that knows Gonzaga, why do they know Gonzaga? Do they know that they have a good history program? If I tell you that they have a great history program you will believe it because their basketball team is good - it is just perceptions. It is just a perception; they are a winning team that is what attracts students. I mean I really looked at I would like to get to the Furman level, the Richmond level, and the Wake Forest level. I do not want to be just exactly like those schools but it would be nice to be mentioned in the same breath. (Subject Frank)

Athletics was basically about as low on the radar screen as you can possibly be. It seemed to me that one of the key changes that Elon was facing early on and this is something I discovered with the very first meeting with the athletic director was what a difficult situation we were in by being in the Big South, which was not a good tie in for football conferences. Conference affiliation is everything, now we were very fortunate to have a home in the Big South and appreciated that that was extremely important to us. But, I was more concerned about your known in higher education circles with the company you keep. I would rather have been, from the get go, affiliated with Davidson, Furman, Wofford, and UNCG, which are all schools that have Phi Beta Kappa chapters then schools like Charleston Southern and Liberty. Not to be disrespectful to those schools, but it is a matter of one set of schools, the Southern Conference, is our peer group when it comes to undergraduate admissions and the other is not, Big South. This was about institutional position as much as it was about athletics, in other words Elon was aspiring to be a Division I school athletically and also academically all at the same time. So I thought the Division I certainly would make sense from each perspective, it was a question of doing it with quality and being affiliated with the right schools. (Subject Lewis)

You are who you play; I mean you are who you play with. If in the paper Elon loses to Davidson that is ok. If in the paper Elon loses to the little sisters of the poor, that is who Elon is associated with, and my line has always been you are who you play with. (Subject Frank)

That process took us to the Southern Conference, when we were thinking what conference could we be in and we realized the Southern Conference, which could work. When VMI wanted out...we people had no idea what kind of a fine situation we could be in, playing Davidson and Furman. This was really about institutional position, we thought these schools were like us and at this point this was the way for us to get to the next level. So this was a way to get to the next level, Elon recognized this was one of the best conferences. (Subject Water)

I saw very little impact in our move to Division II and to be honest to the Big South. The impact was the Southern Conference. We were very fortunate. We used to talk about getting into the Southern Conference. The President made it a top priority. It moved much faster than that I expect. The Athletic Director and the new President made it happen – they gave it the right priority. Visibility – all that stuff – that happened with the Southern Conference. There is nothing wrong with the Big South, or Division II, you know do our constituents really see the difference in playing against Coastal Carolina instead of Lenoir-Rhyne? I don't know – I don't think so – that's my perception. I don't think that strengthened us...but the Southern Conference...visibility is starting to happen... You know, we couldn't get all the group together but we would have loved to get all of these schools together athletically – Elon, Richmond, Wake Forest, Davidson, Furman, Wofford, and maybe a couple of others. But Richmond went more North and Wake isn't leaving the ACC...and then you are left with athletics – but it becomes much more complicated...we enjoyed it most when you are a conference of like minded...some schools are different in the Southern Conference, not good or bad just different – I mean look at the state schools in the Southern Conference, UNCG, App, Western, just look at their tuition. But we work within the system, so we work with what we have. (Subject Yetto)

### *The change in facilities*

As previously noted the facilities changed considerably at Elon during the 1990's and early 2000's with some of the new construction due to the reclassification to Division I. Administrators spoke specifically about the building of the new football stadium as a result of the move to Division I-AA because once administrators decided to upgrade their athletic program they felt the institution needed to improve their athletic facilities, starting first with a new football stadium. In addition, the building of the stadium was also part of the process of creating an environment similar to other Division I campuses. Some administrators felt that being a Division I campus, was not just about having nice athletic facilities but also about making major improvements to the academic facilities as well, which was a necessity in gaining membership to the Southern Conference.

The changes in athletics coincided with the improvements in the admissions process and the academics and institutional ratings, and of course the facilities thing. We knew we weren't going to go Division I until we had the facilities, that stadium in place. And it would have been...the thing that held the stadium up was the Board said we need to have clear priorities. In our mind, it could have happened as early as 1990, maybe even earlier than that. A student center, a fine arts center, a science building, a library, we were very concerned about the academic side first, and this is the path we were going to go first. We were going to get things like the science building and the library done...and there were some moves to jump one thing ahead of the other...but there was a strong consensus that this is what needed to be done. Maybe there were some people who said, 'Lets do the stadium first', But I was so adamant that our academic facilities were going to be in order first...and the faculty were behind me on that. There was a lot of pressure to build the stadiums first, but what the trustees did was to build a science building first, then a library, then a stadium. That to me spoke volumes, that to me was a decision by the board that will go down in Elon history as one of the wisest because it was a statement of we are going to do all of this: We are going to go Division I, we are going to make improvements towards having first class academic programs, we are going to aspire to be a university in every way that you could be a university. Actions speak louder than words! You could say all the platitudes on the face of earth, but if you were to have built that stadium while you were teaching science in the old building it would not go over well. I guarantee you if we were not investing in the library and at the same time we were investing in athletics and we were making that choice not in the library, then hell would be raised. Rightfully so, I would be the first one raising hell. I think because this part of a pretty even handed overall a rising tide with all boats, that is how I describe what is going on at Elon. Athletics is not rising any faster than any other program. (Subject Yetto)

You know I am amazed at how the changes have accelerated. It took so long, to build. And now it looks so easy – it is just bouncing right along...you know a stadium, Division I, new buildings, a law school, more new buildings, you know it is just bouncing right along. And, you know we had to have those academic buildings in order to be Division I, to be in the Southern Conference anyway. As we built the stadium, without all of those academic buildings we would not have gotten into the Southern Conference – and that is what I consider to be Division I, nothing against the Big South or anything that came before. (Subject Frank)

*Summary of Elon*

Athletics has always played a vital role at Elon, even before the institution formally organized an athletic program and competed against other institutions. Early on, administrators believed that a healthy body goes hand in hand with a healthy mind, and therefore, promoted the importance of physical activity and athletic competition. In staying true to the college's values, the essence of competition was stressed over the accolades of victory, in particular if victory was obtained unethically (Stokes, 1982).

As the school began to develop, athletics was used not only as a fundamental piece to a student's learning experience, but from an administration point of view it became a recruiting tool (particularly attracting young men who wished to continue playing sports competitively). Elon administration began to notice the results of not only competing, but winning in high profile sports, such as football and basketball.

In the late 1970's and 1980's, the institution began a marketing plan to change the tiny school's position and status in the academic community. The purpose was, as Keller (2004) described, to "create a different kind of college for a different kind of student" (p.12). As the results of the plan began to happen in the early 1990's, the school's reputation began to change from an ordinary school to one of the "best private schools along the Eastern seaboard" (Keller, 2004, p.2).

One area that administrators changed was their position in the world of intercollegiate athletics. Up until the early 1990's, Elon competed in an association (NAIA) that received very little recognition; one local sportswriter described Elon's stay in the NAIA as an athletic program struggling in "anonymity" (Daniels, 2000, p. C1). To improve its status as an institution that competed on the highest levels, Elon moved to the

NCAA and in 1997 began the move to Division I-AA. Similar to other institutional decisions, administrators believed that the transition to Division I was a move to improve their association with peer institutions.

Most subjects believed that the move has been a positive change for the University. However, the institution has changed in virtually every phase over the last 20 years, so subjects found it difficult to measure the impact of Division I athletics. As subjects stated clearly, it is one of *many* changes that has improved the institution.

Subjects summed up the transition with the following quotes:

I think athletics is probably helped us become better known. Even when Elon is scrolled across the bottom of ESPN that is very important. I don't think Elon is marked number one by athletics. I think who we are is our best part of the school. I think athletics is important, but I think the theater, the women, the men, the community - those things enhance who we are at Elon and what it is. I know people that care about athletics but there are many people on and off campus who would not care. In my mind, the University is judged by more than just athletics. (Subject Black)

It was pretty clear that we were talking about transforming and making better the quality in every part of the institution. From the brass all the way up to how we teach physics and everything laterally, all the curriculum and co-curriculum that we wanted to improve. So naturally athletics was one of those elements that was sitting here... We just kept saying, 'OK, we could have a way better student life program, we could have a better admissions program, we could do better in developmental fundraising, we could do better at athletics.' Athletics was clearly one of those things. But, in athletics there was a clearly defined pecking order that may be sad but true, and at the top is Division I. If you are going to change the perception of how good your institution is, you are known by those whose company you keep. How you prepare your curriculum and that sort of thing, so you're known by who you compete with. This move from NAIA to Division II to Division I in one conference, to another conference, is just an outgrowth of that ok we want to use quality, and an element in quality is who you compete with. (Subject Water)

NO, I don't see us looking back and saying we shouldn't have done this...Now understand, we know we have a ways to go, and, I can imagine we wont get there...it may take awhile, but we will get there. (Subject Yetto)

The bottom line is - we did it for what we believe were all the right reasons.  
(Subject Woods)

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to describe the process of reclassifying an athletic department to Division I and its impact on the institution and stakeholders. The move to Division I is a tedious, complex, and expensive process that requires considerable resources from many constituents. The following findings were gathered using case study methodology, examining two institutions, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Elon University.

The case study approach was chosen because it allowed the researcher the ability to dig deep and identify, discover, and explain each university's reclassification process. Case studies take the reader into the university setting with a vividness and detail not typically present in more analytical reporting formats (Marshall & Rossman, 1990). The case study design permitted the exploration of a single phenomenon, reclassification of an athletic department, as a way to clarify the ongoing complexities of the relationship between athletic programs and higher education programs as suggested by the literature. Schramm (1971) describes the essence of a case study by stating, "the central tendency among all types of case studies, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result" (p. 12). Because the case study methodology relies primarily on the interpretation of the researcher, there were many steps taken to reduce interpretive error, including the tests of triangulation,

member checking, the use of rich descriptions, extensive field time, and the use of external auditors.

As discussed in previous chapters, the study did not focus on comparing one institution to the other, nor was the aim to generalize the findings to a larger population. This study represents an effort to understand as fully as possible the context in which the transition occurred, the process of transitioning the athletic program to Division I, the rationale for the move, and the impact on the institution and its constituency.

### Summary of Findings

The following section provides a brief summary of the research questions at each institution. Following the summary is an examination of how the study enhances the current research on the reclassification of an athletics program.

The study found that each institution, UNCG and Elon University, followed a different process to move their athletic programs to Division I. The composition of the institution and each institution's stakeholders were affected by the move to Division I; however, the level of change to the institution and the impact on the constituency base varied greatly.

**Central Question: How does the reclassification process to Division I athletics impact the organizational dynamics of an institution and its stakeholders?**

### *UNCG*

Researching the impact of reclassification to Division I on the organizational dynamics or composition of UNCG led to an examination of UNCG's unique history, its place in the University of North Carolina system, leadership and organizational reporting

lines, the University's mission statement and profile, academic programs, the university philosophy toward intercollegiate athletics and student life, and the physical changes of the campus. The impact of the move was also studied by examining UNCG's stakeholders such as administrators, faculty, coaches, students (including student-athletes), community leaders, alumni, donors, and fans. Each area was examined to identify organizational change utilizing Pettigrew's contextualist approach.

The case study at UNCG showed that the reclassification of the athletics program had a great impact on the organizational dynamics of the institution and its stakeholders. Examination of the process of reclassification indicated that the impact on the organization and its stakeholders was realized prior to the move, during the move, and some subjects suggested that the effect is still being felt today.

The composition of the institution, formerly known as the Women's College or "WC", was one built based on a true sense of purpose. However, once the institution moved from the "WC" to a co-educational state university in 1963, the fundamental purpose of the institution was lost, as many constituents failed to embrace UNCG's new position in higher education. Many administrators described the University in the 1970's and '80's as a university struggling with an identity crisis. In an effort to bring attention to the "new" UNCG, as well as create awareness for the city of Greensboro, local business leaders optimistically discussed a move to Division I with the new Chancellor very soon after he took office in 1979. Subjects familiar with the Greensboro business leaders' role indicated that their initial financial support and their ability to cultivate other contributions were a major factor in the decision to move to Division I.

As the move to Division I gained attention, many faculty and some WC alumni spoke out against an increased emphasis toward athletics. For these two groups it represented yet another change away from the small liberal arts, student centered school, to the larger research institution similar to the other major state universities in North Carolina. Faculty in particular were outspoken over many administrative decisions, with the reclassification of athletics gaining the most attention. This case study revealed that the move to Division I may have been the most significant decision made by the former administration because it resulted in strained relations between faculty and administration and increased changes in administration.

The rationale for the move focused on helping UNCG create an identity in which the students, alumni, and the community could be proud. Administrators suggested that a strong athletic program could address student apathy toward the University and its athletic teams, help improve relations with the external community as well as raise financial contributions, and develop academic programs and the overall University profile. The UNCG community was quickly divided among those that felt the reclassification to Division I could address these issues versus those that felt that improving athletics was an irrational solution for UNCG's troubles.

The move to Division I appears to have fallen short on improving student attitudes toward UNCG and the athletic program. The case study revealed themes that suggest students traditionally do not support the athletic program on a consistent basis, do not choose UNCG because of its athletic program (outside of student-athletes), and have

stronger affiliations with other schools' athletic teams (particularly UNC-Chapel Hill, North Carolina State, and Duke).

The alumni and the community have started to financially support the University, but support for the athletics department has not grown. For the most part, the UNCG athletic department has not been able to generate the financial support necessary from donors and alumni to fund a competitive Division I program. Therefore, much of the financial burden for UNCG's intercollegiate athletic program still rests on student fees. External support toward the University, including financial backing from the state legislature, the local community, and the alumni has increased tremendously, particularly in the most recent capital campaign.

On the surface, the lack of attention to the athletic program would appear to be a major disappointment to the administration, however, many subjects suggested that the move to Division I athletics has done its job. The move was designed to create awareness and attention to the University, not just the athletic programs. Although, many of the subjects interviewed indicated that they are disappointed by the lack of athletic support (through increased donations, season tickets), they were pleased by the other areas of the University that have blossomed since the transition to Division I. In addition to stronger financial support to the University from the external constituencies, subjects specifically named the strong graduate program, improved undergraduate curriculum, higher academic standards, enhanced student life, a stronger University profile, and a more aesthetically pleasing campus as areas that have improved since the move to Division I.

### *Elon University*

Researching the impact of the reclassification to Division I on the organizational dynamics or composition of Elon led to an examination of areas such as Elon's history, the athletic department, the college athletics atmosphere, the higher education environment, leadership and organizational philosophies, the University's mission statement and profile, academic programs, the University's philosophy toward intercollegiate athletics and student life, and the physical changes of the campus. The impact of the move was also studied by researching the changes in Elon's stakeholders such as administrators, faculty, the athletic department, coaches, students (including student-athletes), community leaders, alumni, donors, and fans. Each area was examined to identify areas of organizational change utilizing Pettigrew's contextualist approach.

The Elon University case study could not easily determine the impact of the reclassification on the organizational dynamics and its constituencies because the move was part of a larger institutional change. The move at Elon to Division I from the NAIA was part of a more comprehensive strategic change that began in the mid 1980's and is still ongoing at Elon. The decision to move to Division I was greatly impacted by the need for the University to improve its institutional profile and status by being accepted into memberships and associations that are selective; one of those memberships is a Division I athletic program.

In 1973, a new president took over Elon and began an organizational change that, over the next 33 years would transform Elon from a private regional college with students that had average academic ability to an international university made up of students that

have a strong academic background. The repositioning of the institution was based on the fact that Elon's personal attention to its students and an attractive campus in warm weather climate had created an environment that students liked.

The philosophy of the new Elon College was to move away from the local and regional admissions strategy that had been used in previous administrations to one that marketed and heavily recruited students from the east coast United States and internationally. Elon would also raise tuition and become a medium-cost college, rather than a low-cost college and recruit students from middle-class to wealthy families that could afford to pay full tuition; which was a must due to Elon's small endowment. The repositioning of Elon also included building associations with a stronger category of peer institutions. Rather than competing against local schools for local talent, administrators wanted to compete against mid- to top-level private and public schools for the best students.

What has made studying the reclassification of athletics at Elon more difficult is in addition to the larger organizational changes made over the last three decades, Elon also experienced a number of changes within the same time frame of the Division I reclassification. Since Elon moved to Division I in 1997, the school has undergone numerous other organizational changes that may also impact the institution and the constituencies such as: the change from Elon College to Elon University, the organizational structure that established the formation of schools, the change in the presidency, the mascot change from the Fighting Christians to the Phoenix, physical changes to campus, and the accreditations of several academic programs. Subjects

indicated that *all* of these changes had an impact on the institution and its constituency, particularly the on campus groups such as faculty and students. Trying to suggest that athletics has had a more profound impact on the institution and its constituency, at this point, is nearly impossible. Therefore subjects continuously suggested that the reclassification is *a* move among many changes, using statements such as, “one piece of the pie”, “a part of”, “*one* factor in the organizational change”.

The change to Division I initially has accomplished the overall goal of positioning Elon University amongst stronger peer institutions. Administrators’ institutional philosophy has been to associate with higher level institutions within each area or department, including academic programs, student life programs, and athletic programs. For example, one of the associations that administrators felt would help market the college was the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA). In 1991, Elon and the other schools in the South Atlantic Conference moved from the lesser know NAIA to the NCAA Division II level. In 1997, Elon administrators decided that Division II did not match the new institutional philosophy of competing against the best. Therefore, Elon moved to Division I in the fall of 1997, playing as a provisional member until 1999, when the school became eligible for Big South Conference Championships.

Administrators were not content with the institution’s membership in the Big South and were quick to accept an invitation to the more prestigious Southern Conference. Because of their newest association in the Southern Conference, administrators felt that the move to Division I had accomplished its greatest goal of using

the athletic program to help generate strong peer associations in a highly visible area, Division I athletics.

Outside of the constituencies directly associated with the athletic programs (the athletic product, the coaches, the mascot name change, the student-athletes) and the University facilities, subjects could not indicate the affect the reclassification has had on other groups, namely the faculty, the community, and the alumni. Most subjects felt that the student body had been impacted by the move to Division I, as athletics is one segment in many aspects of Elon's commitment to student life. This impact, however, was indistinguishable in comparison to all of the other major changes that were taking place in concert with the reclassification.

#### *Research Questions*

The following primary research questions were addressed in order to achieve the purpose of this study:

#### **Research Question 1: Why did the reclassification of the athletic program to Division I status occur?**

*UNCG.*

The data gathered throughout the UNCG case study indicated that the reasons for the move to Division I were to:

- (1) Increase public awareness to help fight UNCG's "identity crisis"
- (2) Improve development efforts in hopes of bringing in more money to the University
- (3) Address student apathy

Since UNCG became part of the University system in 1963, it struggled to develop an identity as a co-educational, research focused, state university. In an effort to bring attention to UNCG's new institutional profile and to create an atmosphere similar to other North Carolina state schools, the administration decided to move the intercollegiate athletics program from Division III to Division I. UNCG administrators believed the move to Division I was a good administrative decision for both the athletic program and the University for several reasons. First, the move to Division I could be done in a relatively short amount of time (5 years) compared to other organizational changes (such as academic programs which needed to be approved by the Board of Governors). Second, the move had some strong support from the local business community, which could spur relations between the Greensboro constituency base and UNCG. Third, the move would gain much media attention, something the University had been lacking. Finally, the athletic program had recent success at the Division III level and administrators believed that with appropriate support Division I success could be attained.

Administrators had long witnessed the attention given to other state universities in North Carolina because of their Division I athletic success. A rationale developed that if UNCG offered a Division I athletics program, then the University would receive much needed exposure. Administrators felt that the athletics move would help bring attention to UNCG from external constituencies including the Board of Governors, the state legislature, alumni, the Greensboro community, and the people of North Carolina; all groups that administrators felt were not responsive to UNCG. Once these groups were

drawn to UNCG's through athletics, they would then become more informed about other areas of the University. The University would work to cultivate the external groups into financial supporters of UNCG, its academic departments, and the athletic programs.

UNCG administrators felt strongly that upgrading the athletics program would address concerns regarding campus life and student apathy. When the new administration began in 1979, one of the areas they wanted desperately to fix was the student life programs. Throughout the 1980's, the administration worked hard to improve on campus housing, campus recreation, Greek life, and intercollegiate athletics; areas students of the time identified as a necessity for a good student life program.

Administrators believed that an improvement in the quality of student social life through a Division I athletics program would enhance student recruitment and retention, which would then bring regional and national awareness to stronger academic programs. Supporters of the move to Division I believed that the change in student life, through a Division I athletics program, would be the first of many organizational changes at UNCG. Administrators believed that a successful Division I athletics program would bring great pride to the UNCG students, similar to the pride seen at other schools with successful athletic teams.

Essentially, once UNCG's Division I athletic program began receiving positive publicity, many of the constituencies that failed to grasp the change from the Women's College to the University would begin to take notice of the new UNCG. It was the administration's plan, that the move to Division I would generate much needed attention to other areas. The new exposure would benefit the University through increased

financial support from the legislature, more student applicants, improved student life programs, and increased alumni giving.

*Elon University.*

The move at Elon to Division I from the NAIA was part of a larger, more comprehensive strategic change that began in the mid 1980's and is still ongoing at Elon today. The decision to move to Division I was greatly impacted by the need for the University to improve its academic status through acceptance into memberships and associations that are selective; one of those memberships included Division I.

As Elon's student body was becoming more academically gifted, the campus was becoming more attractive, the academic programs were improving, the faculty was growing, and the overall institutional profile was getting stronger, the athletics program was in need of better direction. As the academic programs were working to become accredited by the best associations in their discipline, the athletic program was gaining little attention. Unsatisfied with the Division II level, Elon administrators felt that athletics need to match the success of the academic programs, the institutional profile and the new, aggressive institutional philosophy. This case study revealed that the move to Division I was an organizational change, similar to other decisions, that would put Elon at the highest level possible.

Administrators felt that the major benefit of the move to Division I was the peer association with other schools that participate in Division I athletics. The alliance with the Division I members would bring an increase in public recognition and media exposure that administrators felt was needed. Elon University had strong academics,

good faculty, a beautiful campus, and an atmosphere that students and parents seemed to desire; however, administrators felt they needed help telling their story. A Division I athletics program would help bring “top of the mind” recognition to constituents that were unfamiliar with the school. Being associated with other successful private schools such as Richmond, Davidson, Furman, and Wofford (all Division I institutions), was a benefit administrators felt was very important.

**a. What or who was the motivation for change?**

*UNCG.*

The motivation to change at UNCG was based on administrators', in particular the former Chancellor's, belief that a strong athletic program would enhance the image of the University and the new institutional profile which was emphasizing graduate programs. In addition, the local business community had great interest in the University's move to Division I because their hope was that UNCG winning in men's basketball could help improve the city's image. Much of the local business leaders' attitude toward college sports and the potential impact on the city was shaped by other North Carolina universities and their relationship with their cities (Chapel Hill, Durham, Raleigh). The most prominent example given by the Greensboro business leaders was the unexpected success of UNC Charlotte's 1977 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament Final Four appearance.

*Elon University.*

The move to Division I was initiated by a structural move of the South Atlantic Conference, the conference in which Elon was a longstanding member. In 1991, the

South Atlantic Conference membership decided to move from NAIA to NCAA Division II because of concern that the NAIA would not be able to support the needs of the conference members. In addition, the institution was undergoing (and had completed) several other prominent organizational changes that would enhance the schools image. Subjects interviewed stated that the administration, specifically the former President, Provost, and Athletic Director, did not feel that Division II was a long-term solution, simply because it did not match the forward thinking philosophy of the administration. Although, Division III was a possible option, Elon administration felt that the move to Division I would match the overall philosophy of developing associations with stronger peer groups.

Rather than move the athletics department to Division I as an initial change, Elon chose to make changes to their academic and student life departments, as well as aesthetic changes to the campus first. The move to Division I came well after many organizational changes on campus began to take place or had finished.

**Research Question 2: How have the anticipated effects from establishing a NCAA Division I athletic program been realized?**

*UNCG.*

Many UNCG administrators felt that the athletic department reclassification was the first of many changes to the University. Administrators believed that the anticipated effects of Division I athletics would be improved student life, increased attention to the school that would generate greater interest in the undergraduate and graduate program,

and an increase in financial support from alumni and the Greensboro community. In addition, there was an expectation that the athletic teams would also improve.

While answering if these effects have been realized, subjects' responses differed based on their own determination of success. For example, some subjects felt that the move to Division I really had done very little to improve the University. Subjects pointed to the data that show a lack of student interest, small fan base, and lack of financial support as examples of how the reclassification has not impacted student life or community visibility. Interviewees suggested that many students, faculty, and alumni do not really pay attention to the athletics program and are not influenced by the success or failure of the teams.

Other subjects believed that the reclassification is still a work in progress and it would be unfair to judge the reclassification at this point. Many of these same subjects believed that the University needs to support athletics more, not less, and to be Division I meant that the entire University would be a Division I institution, not just the athletics program. Some subjects felt that many areas within the University are still slow to embrace Division I.

Other subjects felt that if you look beyond the low numbers of fans, donors, and student participation, the reclassification was very successful. For these subjects, the reclassification generated a much needed buzz about the new UNCG. Since the move to Division I, many other changes have occurred and some subjects look back to the reclassification as the first major statement made by the administration since UNCG changed its mission in 1963.

Some subjects were adamant about their belief that without a Division I athletics program, much of the University support that exists today would not be present. These subjects believed that because of the Division I athletics program, the profile, the campus, and the culture have changed at UNCG. Subjects were not suggesting that athletics deserved credit for all of the campus changes, rather indicated in several different ways, that athletics was a big part of the successful transformation of the University.

*Elon University.*

Elon administrators believed that the athletics move has been successful thus far, solely based on the fact that Elon is now a member of the Southern Conference, which means it is now associated with strong athletic and academic institutions such as Davidson, Wofford, and Furman. Most subjects suggested that at some point Elon athletic programs would have to be competitive in the Southern Conference and expect that the more games and championships won, the better the reclassification decision will work. Subjects, however, would not go as far as to say that losing would mean the reclassification did not work.

Overall, Elon administrators felt that the reclassification was and is still successful, but expect it to get better with each year. Several subjects felt that the “real” reclassification came when Elon gained membership into the Southern Conference. There is a belief that like many of Elon’s academic programs, which have excelled in recent years, so too will athletics.

**a. How did the reclassification of intercollegiate athletics impact the overall mission of the institution?**

*UNCG.*

Subjects at UNCG strongly believed that the reclassification of athletics impacted the overall mission of the institution. Most believed that it may not have been the single greatest impact to the overall mission but it was the most public. Many administrators felt that the move to Division I helped people grasp the idea that UNCG was no longer the liberal arts, small school, “WC” and was now quite different. Administrators that felt the mission was impacted in a positive way believed that the athletic change represented the new mission of the University. Subjects discussed that the mission of the University was changed in 1963, when it became a state University. However, for many reasons, the University did not embrace the mission until the Chancellor took office in 1979.

Other subjects suggested that some constituencies, particularly the faculty and the WC alumnae felt the reclassification impacted the mission in a very negative way; in fact, some constituents still believe that it was a bad decision to grow the athletics program. For some subjects, the impact on the mission was detrimental simply because the reclassification represented an overemphasis on athletics, which counteracts the mission of educating.

*Elon University.*

Elon University administrators believed that the overall mission of the University had changed long before the athletics program moved to Division I, and therefore the impact on the University has been minimal. Administrators made great strides in the 1980’s and beyond to improve the student profile, teaching strategies, the on-campus

atmosphere and culture, as well as the look of campus. The move to Division I was merely another component of the move to improve the University.

Most administrators indicated that because of the limited athletic success thus far, the move to Division I had not brought a tremendous amount of publicity for the school. Subjects did, however, indicate that just being a Division I member in the Southern Conference was already a great institutional benefit. Subjects specifically cited the scores of games on ESPN and CNN, the national attention from the USA Today, regional coverage from news outlets in the Southeast region, and the increased coverage from the local outlets, particularly the Piedmont Triad (Greensboro, High Point, and Winston-Salem) and Alamance County.

**b. How did the reclassification of intercollegiate athletics change the university constituency (administration, faculty, staff, students, alumni)?**

*UNCG.*

The constituency at UNCG has changed considerably over time, as the University has progressed toward the mission of becoming a research intensive institution that serves over 16,000 students. Subjects, however, disputed the idea that the reclassification of intercollegiate athletics was responsible for this change. Subjects believed that some areas of the University, namely the athletic product, athletic staff, coaches, and student-athletes, have changed to resemble a Division I athletics program. In examining other constituency groups, some subjects believed that athletics was the initial transformation that spurred many other changes on campus, and therefore may have had an indirect impact on the change seen in the administration, faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

University administrators have changed since the move to Division I, however subjects felt that most of the change was due to normal turnover in higher education administration. However, subjects felt that the former Chancellor's resignation, and possibly other high ranking administrators, was greatly influenced by the move in athletics, because that was the most disputed change made by his administration. Some subjects described it as a representation or blueprint for how administrative decisions were made, mostly without faculty input. The athletic decision for some faculty was the final straw, and therefore, the Chancellor struggled to regain faculty confidence.

The change at the top brought the first female Chancellor to UNCG, who has since reconnected to the University's past, particularly with alumnae of the WC. In addition, subjects indicated that the lines of communication between faculty and administration are more open, and more often than not administrative decision making has been received positively.

The case study at UNCG indicated that athletics may have had an indirect impact on faculty change because some subjects interviewed believed that the athletic change initiated the enhancements to the academic programs, the graduate school, thus attracting a different kind of faculty member. Specifically, UNCG's move to Division I helped bring attention to the new direction of the University, one that is research driven, which as a result would attract faculty with more of a research interest. Research also indicated that many of the new faculty seem to be more open to Division I athletics or they carry no animosity toward the athletic program as opposed to some faculty members that were at UNCG when the change was made. Subjects, however, did not indicate that there was a

direct relationship between the change in athletics and the change in faculty, as one subject suggested that most faculty know very little about the athletics program.

The type of student has changed and the number of students on campus has increased considerably since the move to Division I. However student apathy toward athletics seems to have changed very little. The fact that the student apathy remains suggests for some subjects that the Division I athletics program at UNCG has done very little to impact admissions or student life. Subjects agreed that the student-athletes have changed, and therefore a portion of the student body has been transformed due to the move to Division I.

The case study at UNCG revealed that alumni are more generous than in the past, but not toward athletics. For the most part, athletics still goes financially unrewarded by the alumni at UNCG. Although giving in recent years has increased to athletics, administrators felt that it was a result of the current campaign.

*Elon University.*

The move to Division I did little to change campus administration, with the exception of adding more mid-level administrators in athletics. The athletic department jumped from under 25 employees prior to Division I to 60 in the 2005-06 academic year. The decision to move to Division I did not appear to impact the administrative philosophy or the relationships among administrators. The decision received very little negative feedback and most administrators, as well as other constituents, believed that the move to Division I was the correct decision. Administrators spoke very freely about the move and appeared to feel very little pressure or anxiety about the decision. Stated

clearly, the Elon administrators believed that it was the right decision to make. In fact, some administrators described the decision as if it was the *only* possible decision to make.

Subjects felt that the faculty did not change as a result of the move to Division I. Findings indicated that the change in faculty was due to increased need, as well as an increased emphasis on identifying and hiring faculty members that would excel under the Elon teacher/scholar philosophy.

The students at Elon have changed considerably over the last two decades, which was well before the move to Division I. Research suggested that the change in students has become more evident over the last 8-10 years, however, findings did not suggest that the accelerated change was due to the move to Division I.

The alumni at Elon have become more involved in the University for several reasons. First, the majority of Elon's alumni are still relatively young with close to 65% graduating within the last 25 years (Elon University (2007)). Some of these alumni are beginning to be in a position to give back to Elon. Second, the athletic program has been described by the interviewees as a source of pride for alumni. As giving has increased considerably since moving to Division I, it appears more alumni are giving back directly to the athletics program. It should be noted that the Elon athletics fund moved to a premium seating program, which ties donations into improved seat location at home games. If donors would like to have the best possible seats for football and basketball games, they will give more. Recently, Mahoney, Gladden, and Funk (2003) identify priority seating for football and basketball as the most important motive for an athletic

department contribution, overwhelming any social or philanthropic motives. Third, alumni seem to be more active because the University is more active in cultivating and soliciting the alumni base, creating more events, capital campaigns, annual fund drives, and the hiring of more personnel strictly designed to raise money or to entertain alumni. While taking all of these factors into account, administrators still felt strongly that a Division I athletics program does impact the alumni base, mostly in a very positive way.

**c. How did the reclassification of intercollegiate athletics result in a change in university resources (i.e., personnel, enrollment, and facilities)?**

*UNCG.*

The UNCG athletic department resources were increased considerably, as indicated by increased personnel, student-athletes, and the number of athletic facilities on campus. However, research did not provide a clear answer to whether the reclassification impacted other aspects of the University's property. Again, if one believes that athletics was the impetus for other campus transformations, it would follow that resources have changed as a result of the move to Division I. Several subjects cited the increased state aid to UNCG and an increase in donations to other areas of the University from donors originally attracted by athletics as areas that may have been impacted by the move to Division I. Some interviewees felt that the increase may not have been possible without the attention of the reclassification.

Enrollment has also increased considerably, with much of that due to the strategic plan of the University to grow at a very fast rate. Although some subjects believed that athletics has improved student life, and an improved student life has led to more

students applying, attending and graduating from UNCG, subjects could not say with certainty that the increased enrollment is directly related to the move to Division I.

As documented earlier, resources have been provided to improve the athletic facilities over the last 20 years. Much of the money has come from student fees and to a small degree from donations. Since moving to Division I, UNCG administrators have made an effort to enhance their athletic facilities to match or exceed that of their Division I competition. University facilities have also been greatly improved since the move to Division I, with much of the funding to rebuild coming from state aid and capital campaigns. Again, some subjects felt that the state aid was improved considerably because state representatives and the Board of Governors began to take notice of UNCG once the move to Division I happened.

*Elon University.*

Because the athletic reclassification came after many of the increases in University resources, administrators did not feel that the move to Division I had a great impact on the institutional changes. However, examining some of the changes more closely revealed that the rate of change has increased considerably since 1999, the first year of Division I membership. It is important to note however, that the institution officially changed from Elon College to Elon University in 2001 and the current President, who has been described as a very aggressive, forward thinking type leader, took office in 1999. Administrators felt that those two changes may have had more influence on the quick jump, than did the reclassification. The reclassification however,

did lead to several changes to the athletic resources, including more personnel, better athletic facilities, and increased scholarships.

The most prominent reason for the increased resources has been from the administrative decision to steadily increase enrollment (and tuition revenue) since 1993-1994. Elon has also worked very hard to build its endowment and increase donations to provide additional resources; however, Elon is still heavily dependent on student tuition to pay for much of the operational costs. In addition to the increased number of students, Elon like many other private institutions has also increased the cost of attending Elon annually.

Some subjects indicated that you could make the argument that the Division I athletics program has helped improve national recognition and therefore is a part of the increase in student applications. However, more research would need to be conducted to further elucidate the relationship. It should be noted that the decision to upgrade to Division I was one of three decisions that administrators were considering at the same time. The other two changes included a change in the mascot from Fighting Christians to Phoenix, which received some resistance from alumni, and the bigger change, which may have distracted faculty, was the change from college to university.

#### Interpretations

This study was conducted to tell the story of reclassification from two distinct perspectives: a large, state-supported, research oriented, Division I-AAA university (UNCG), and a private institution with a medium sized enrollment, focused on teaching

and scholarship, with a Division I-AA athletic program (Elon). The following section provides a discussion of the results as they relate to previous research.

The conceptual framework chosen as the basis for this study was very important to the identification of expected and unexpected themes throughout each case study. Examining the reclassification to Division I at UNCG and Elon through context, content, and process allowed the data to be categorized and discussed as independent data, yet it became clear that each area noticeably related to the other. Although Pettigrew's contextualist approach was used to study organizational change in business organization, it appears as though it is a useful tool in analyzing reclassification and higher education organizational change which will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

#### *UNCG Case Study*

The data from the case study at UNCG suggest that the move to Division I had an impact on the institutional structure and its constituencies at UNCG. While it was anticipated that the athletic program would be greatly affected by the transition to Division I, the high level of impact to other areas of campus was unexpected. Findings from the case study suggested that the decision to reclassify was much larger than solely the athletic department. It became apparent that various external and internal factors such as the history of the University, the Greensboro community, the North Carolina State University System, as well as the college athletic environment, influenced the decision to reclassify. In addition, individual roles, University leadership, alumni and community input, and the NCAA process of reclassification made the move to Division I complex. Overall, the organizational change of moving to Division I at UNCG was a very complex

process that impacted the larger University community and the future of the institution. In terms of Pettigrew's contextualist framework, the complexity of the process can be best described by the following constructs: context, process, and content.

Context is separated into two categories, inner context and outer context.

Pettigrew (1987) described inner context as those organizational elements that influence the change process. The ideas of change will pass through the inner context. The outer context refers to the "social, economic, political, and competitive environment in which the organization operates" (Pettigrew, 1985a, p. 657). Much of the "why" of change is derived from an analysis of context, particularly the inner context. Pilot study data, document analysis, and archival data indicated that the context in which the decision to reclassify was larger than the athletic department. After conducting this case study, it became apparent that UNCG chose to reclassify in order to develop an identity within the state system, in a higher education environment and college athletics environment in which most schools are trying to become "the best", and a local environment that needed to improve its image among other North Carolina cities.

The University's history and the change in the mission statement played a greater role in the impact of the decision than initially believed. Data suggested that administrators believed that reclassifying athletics to Division I would be a way to improve student life, bring attention to UNCG and its academic programs, help improve the University's profile as a doctoral granting institution, and help connect to community leaders, state leaders, alumni, and other external constituency groups. For many of these groups, UNCG was still the "WC", a small, women's only, liberal arts college, with

virtually no resemblance to other state schools, specifically UNC Chapel Hill, UNC Charlotte, or North Carolina State University. The move to Division I at UNCG was more than just a public relations effort; it was a dramatic attempt to move away from the “WC” and toward a bigger, perhaps better, research intensive university. It was learned that the history of an institution can influence organizational change considerably; in the case of the UNCG, it in fact was, and some subjects say still is, a large part of all organizational changes at UNCG.

Attempts to divorce the organization from its history can be very difficult and create ongoing tension throughout the organization. Tension can also spread to the external constituencies and tarnish relationships. The rich history of the WC was so important to many constituents (students, faculty and alumni) that the move to Division I was completely against the WC philosophy. A deeper understanding of these particular groups’ feelings of alienation was needed to grasp the complexities of the move to Division I.

It was assumed by the researcher that the changing landscape of college athletics and higher education in the mid 1980’s would have an impact on the decision to reclassify. However, it was unexpected that higher education administrators at UNCG were so aware of other institutions’ success, both academically and athletically. As schools around UNCG, in particular North Carolina state schools were doing many things to gain recognition and financial support, administration at UNCG felt that in order to keep pace, changes needed to be made.

The UNCG community was greatly influenced by the athletic success of UNC-Chapel Hill, North Carolina State, and extremely influenced by the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, who in the early 1970's moved to Division I and then proceeded to go to the Final Four in 1977. The UNCG community was also aware of Division I failures. As UNCG was moving to Division I, the internal constituency was paying close attention to the athletic department scandal at North Carolina State. Detractors of the move used the problems at North Carolina State as a perfect example of the harm Division I athletics can do to an institution.

Academically, UNCG was struggling to compete with the big research universities in North Carolina (namely UNC-Chapel Hill and North Carolina State) and were losing students to established state universities such as Appalachian State and Western Carolina, but perhaps the most disturbing to UNCG officials were schools that were adding or improving their academic programs and getting considerable amount of public attention (UNC Wilmington, Appalachian State, and UNC Charlotte) while UNCG's changes were going unnoticed.

It was expected that a number of people were involved in the decision to move to Division I, however, the various groups and their roles in the process were larger than anticipated. Schools that are considering a reclassification need to examine each area of the institution and very specifically define their wants and needs prior to the organizational change. Based on the UNCG case study, constituency groups want to be involved in the decision making process and expect their opinions to matter.

An early examination of the impact of the city leaders, who administrators described as very influential, provides a clear picture of the role that outside constituencies can play in big organizational decisions. In this case, the city leaders, also known as the “Big Five”, played the role that at other schools might normally be filled by alumni; these groups that support the athletic program have become known as boosters. Among other roles, the Big Five held preliminary discussions with two chancellors about the possibility of upgrading the men’s basketball program, convincing the second Chancellor to study the move intensely. The Big Five also provided financial support to help cover costs associated with the move, and bring other donors to the University. The role of the Big Five at UNCG was somewhat diminished, in comparison to “Big-Time” Division I athletic programs, when the former Chancellor assumed complete control of the athletic program, which included the fundraising arm of athletics. This was purposely done to control the outside influences on the athletic department, a mistake other Division I schools had made prior and subsequent to UNCG’s move to Division I.

The study brings to the forefront two major issues: (1) It is possible that with athletic success or the potential of athletic success, local leaders or alumni may want to play a significant role in a mid-major Division I athletic program; (2) As a higher education administrator it is important to assume complete control of the decision making process from the boosters.

UNCG administrators, particularly the former Chancellor, made it clear before the reclassification to Division I that the final “say” in athletic department decisions would be made with his authority. Subjects felt that the Chancellor’s ability to establish control

of the athletic program was important for all constituents, particularly boosters and faculty, because the University would control athletics, not athletics controlling the University. At the time, the decision to have the Chancellor be heavily involved in athletic decision making was a novel yet insignificant approach due to the gravity of other University decisions being made at the time. Yet today, other schools are adopting the model of chancellor or presidential control, as high level administrators at Division I institutions are held responsible for problems within the athletic program when there appears to be a lack of institutional control.

In addition to the Big Five, there was a small group of alumni that seemed to be supportive of the move initially. The University hoped that this group of alumni support would continue to grow; however, the increase did not happen. Over the years, the fan base has been slow to respond to any of the sports, including men's soccer and basketball. More importantly, the alumni have not provided the necessary external funds to support the athletic program which has forced the student fees to remain high. This finding is very important because, after 16 years at Division I, it raises the question of whether or not alumni will ever support UNCG. At the moment, alumni, fans, and the city of Greensboro still has affiliations to other Division I programs.

The students were very important throughout the reclassification process for several reasons. Students initially supported the move to Division I by voicing their opinion through surveys conducted at UNCG in the late 1970's, early and mid 1980's. Surveys indicated that a majority of the student body wanted to have a Division I program and would support it through increased student fees. Students then became, and

still are, the largest supporter of the Division I athletic program through student fees. Administrators indicated that, ideally, the University would become less dependant on the student fees by creating other sources of revenue (game day revenue, donations, corporate sponsorship), however those sources have not grown quickly enough and the dependence on student fees has become greater. Based on the UNCG case study, it would now seem naive to think that UNCG could relieve the students' financial burden. In order to support the move to Division I, schools have always placed a financial burden on students, alumni, the community, the University or a combination of all of these constituencies. The idea that students would be relieved of much of their burden would mean that other areas of revenue would need to be increased. Since other constituencies have decided not to help financially with the increased expenses, student fees continued to increase. It appears that the early planning by UNCG administrators grossly overestimated the support the athletic department would get from donors. The overestimation of the donor support in the mid 1980's still impacts UNCG students today. Essentially, as Division I athletics at UNCG continues to get more expensive the burden of financial support rests more with student fees. Consequently, this fact raises a question about whether students that indicated that they would support a Division I program in surveys conducted in the 1970's and 80's understood that they voting to increase student fees over 20 years later.

It was assumed that athletic administrators played the most significant role in the decision making process, however the study indicated that the role of the athletic administrators was initially that of an information provider or fact gatherer. The idea to

upgrade did not originate from the athletic department, rather it came from local business leaders and the former Chancellor. The athletic administrators, in particular the athletic director, did play a more prominent role as the process to reclassify advanced; however, they were not initiators. The athletic administrators worked very closely with the NCAA, numerous athletic conferences, internal constituents, and alumni to make the process as effective as possible once the decision was made to reclassify.

The meaning behind the role of the athletic department is important to understand because people may assume that athletic administrators always initiate changes in the athletic department. In the case of the reclassification at UNCG, the organizational change was initiated by upper administration. Understanding the former Chancellor's role as a catalyst, would go against the belief that presidents, chancellors, and other upper level administrators chose not to get involved in athletics, and in fact, do not care to understand athletic department decision making. At UNCG, University administrators not only supported such a move, but rather initiated the improvement to the Division III program, conducted the five year research plan about the role of intercollegiate athletics, and made the final decision to move to Division I.

In addition to the reclassification, the faculty role throughout the process was very significant to the organizational change. Faculty voiced their disapproval of the reclassification, as they often rejected any change that was against the "WC" philosophy. Administrators described working with faculty as the most difficult part of the reclassification process. Data throughout the case study indicated that there were three types of faculty: faculty who were for the move, faculty that were against the move, and

those that did not voice or have an opinion. Although the last category had the most faculty members in it, the first received the most attention during the process. Faculty that supported the move did not see this as a threat to the academic integrity of the institution, while faculty that were against the move believed it was a risk to the institutional mission and the proud history of the institution.

The decision to move to Division I was an administrative decision, which went against a faculty vote that rejected the move. Once the move was made, faculty became more upset because not only did they not want the move, they felt that their voice was not heard. Some subjects felt that this decision was one of many in which administration had ignored the faculty position. Higher education administrators must understand and appreciate the power of their constituents, particular faculty when making organizational changes. In the case of UNCG, it became very apparent that the faculty made the process of reclassification extremely difficult. More so than any other group, faculty took the decision the hardest, as some continued to fight for the de-emphasis of athletics. It was expected that faculty would play a role in the decision to move to Division I, and it was also expected that a majority of the faculty were against the move; however the unexpected outcome was some faculty's lingering feelings of disappointment and their reactions to the decision. Some subjects felt that the move to Division I was the final attempt in developing a good working relationship between faculty and upper administration. Once faculty were ignored, the relationship deteriorated quickly and trust between the two parties became nonexistent. Data also indicated that some faculty are still not supportive of the move and reject any claim that suggests the move has been a

positive for the University. Although it has diminished, athletic administration still believes that there are some faculty on campus that resent the athletic product. This would indicate that constituents may not be quick to accept and conform once the process to reclassify has been completed.

The process itself was more complicated than originally anticipated. UNCG was the first to move the entire athletic department from Division III to Division I, and did it in an unprecedented five years. However, the “process” to move began long before 1986, when it became an official move. Data indicated that the thought process started but quickly stopped after faculty rejected the idea in the mid 1970’s. Once a new Chancellor was appointed in 1980, the idea was again discussed; the result this time was a preliminary study to examine the possibility of reclassifying. After several years and continuous evaluation, the move was made. The reclassification process officially concluded once UNCG joined Division I in 1991, however, organizational change as a result of the move continued well after 1991. The process of “being Division I” began almost immediately as the years that followed brought tremendous change to UNCG through conference affiliation, a larger budget, more teams, growth in athletic personnel, more talented student-athletes, and coaching and administrative turnover. The University has seen a stronger enrollment, new undergraduate academic programs, a stronger graduate program, a smarter student body, more faculty, facility growth, and administrative change which included a new Chancellor.

It was learned that the process to move to Division I was an organizational change that required a tremendous amount of time and energy from the University

administration, more so than just the five years during the move. Although some may disagree with the final decision, the analysis and the detail given to the process by the UNCG administration cannot be questioned. Administrators closely examined various options when reclassifying the athletics program, received feedback from various groups, spoke with other schools at the Division I level, and worked closely with the NCAA to make the move as efficient as possible. Once in Division I, administrators added sports, increased funding, moved conferences, and enhanced facilities with a tremendous amount of thought. Decisions were not carelessly or quickly made, despite the fact that some were not popular and almost all had consequences.

The study also highlighted the number of people that were involved in the process of reclassification. As discussed throughout the case study, the process to move was evaluated by many groups outside of the athletic department, such as University administrators, faculty, staff, alumni, business leaders, and legislatures. It was originally anticipated that these groups played a secondary role in the workings of the athletic department. However, it became clear that the athletic department although very active in the process played a lesser role than anticipated in the initial decision making and did not act alone in determining many of the final decisions.

This study provided subjects an opportunity to judge the impact of the reclassification by examining the changes to the institution and different constituencies. Subjects discussed the changes in the student-athlete, the athletic program, and the athletic department, as well as changes to the University's campus, academic programs, and institutional profile. In addition, the impact on constituent groups such as faculty,

students, and alumni were also examined. The range of responses and how subjects viewed the reclassification were unexpected.

Subjects specifically named athletic events, such as the NCAA women's soccer tournament in 1997 and 1998 that UNCG hosted, the team championships, and NCAA postseason play, as events that have had a positive impact on the University. Subjects used the success of these events as rationale for moving to Division I. Data gathered also suggested that the move to Division I allowed the University to recruit and retain a strong student-athlete, hire or hold on to good coaches, staff and administrators, all of which created a better athletic department. Subjects felt that a big part of the improved athletic department is the department's ability to avoid trouble and negative publicity.

Some subjects also suggest that the move to Division I helped escalate the growth of the University because the external constituency base became aware of the changes at UNCG. Essentially, the attention given to the University through the reclassification provided additional success by helping improve the university profile and becoming a "Division I institution". Subjects felt that there was a strong relationship between the Division I institution and the growth of the University's research program. It was unexpected that subjects would judge the reclassification of the athletic program to Division I based on the improvements to the academic programs, campus aesthetics, and the university profile. Interestingly, subjects that felt the reclassification was a success did not only look at athletic measures, such as winning percentages, tickets sold, and athletic donations given, but also mentioned the additional changes to the University.

However, not all the research gathered suggested that the reclassification was an overwhelming success. Data indicated that alumni contributions to athletics have not consistently increased and the low number of fans attending home games would suggest that the external community has not embraced the Division I program. Subjects felt that the North Carolina community is still loyal to other state institutions. Student apathy may have improved since the mid 1980's, but not enough for subjects to see a drastic improvement.

Other subjects indicated a disappointment in the current product, suggesting that when they imagined a Division I program, they pictured a bigger and better athletic department with more support from the fans, community, and the University. An unexpected finding in the study was the number of subjects that felt the University made the right decision in moving to Division I, but thought that their athletic programs are far from being a true "Division I" program. Some subjects seemed to express feelings of neutrality or detachment to the future of Division I athletics at UNCG when suggesting that much of what they have is not going to change. There were feelings that indicated that the subjects did not really expect campus, the alumni, or the city and state, to open up and embrace the Spartans.

#### *Elon University Case Study*

The decision to reclassify at Elon University was impacted by two main factors: the internal University environment, which was constantly developing plans to improve the University profile, and the higher education environment including the intercollegiate athletic environment.

The move to Division I was part of a larger more comprehensive University change that focused on making organizational changes to improve the quality of the student experience as well as the University's status among higher education institutions. The decision to reclassify to Division I was done after many of the other organizational changes had taken place or were in the process of being completed. Elon administrators were anticipating that the move to Division I would bring *additional* recognition to the numerous changes already made, not as an initial step to other organizational changes. Administrators felt strongly that although some schools use athletics as a catalyst for organizational change, Elon would not. The campus context allowed the University to take a different approach to moving to Division I; it was believed that athletics could market the changes that had already been established.

The healthy environment in which the reclassification took place was also aided by the specific timing of the move. Administrators suggested that they thought eventually the athletic programs would become Division I; however administrators were waiting for the right moment to reclassify. That time came *after* much of the campus had accomplished (or was in the process of accomplishing) success, which was part of the institution's organizational plans in the 1980's. It was unexpected, and perhaps unique, that the administration at Elon placed the timing of the athletic moves after other organizational changes. It was anticipated that when a school opts to reclassify it would be used as a method to jumpstart other changes, as seen in the previous case study. Elon used the reclassification as a secondary approach.

In addition, the athletic programs at Elon had a strong history of student participation and had a proud tradition of athletic success. Perhaps the most significant era was the early 1980's which subjects indicated constituents were very proud of winning the NAIA football championship. Subjects suggested that the University's proud athletic history was an indication that Elon had always been and could continue to be competitive. Combining the past accomplishments of athletics with the current success of the institution, administrators believed that the move to Division I would work.

It was expected that Elon administrators considered the past athletic success when determining the direction of the athletic programs. However, it appears administrators over inflated the success of their athletic program, consistently referring to the NAIA Championships in football and tennis, which happened years earlier. An examination of the athletic programs suggested that Elon had a very good athletic history, but it is hard to suggest that the institution was dominant in their athletic programs; particularly, in high profile sports (football, men's basketball) during recent history (1990-present).

Outside of the Elon "bubble", the administration kept a close watch on other higher education institutions, particularly private institutions in peer classifications at or higher than Elon. As a private institution, Elon was (and still is) forced to compete with less expensive public institutions, as well as private institutions that may provide a less expensive option or may cost more but offer a better student experience. To address this, Elon administrators believed that it was important to provide a good value, or offer to prospective students a good collegiate experience at a cost just below the average cost of

other peer institution private schools. The theme of providing a high quality experience to students would be seen across campus in academic programs, recreation opportunities, modern technology, updated facilities, and eventually a Division I athletic program. The increased emphasis of athletics indicated that administrators at Elon University believed that a Division I program would help provide a high quality experience to their students.

Other private schools at the Division I level have experienced national recognition from their athletic achievements. As television exposure in the 1980's and 90's increased, in particular for men's basketball programs, small private schools without Division I-A football programs were major beneficiaries. Because Northeast schools such as St. John's University, Georgetown, Providence, and Villanova as well as Southern schools such as Richmond and Davidson, all experienced national attention in the 1980's, it seemed reasonable that other private institutions believed that this type of recognition was possible. As the coverage continued nationally, West Coast schools such as Loyola Marymount, Pepperdine, and Gonzaga all experienced national media exposure in the 1990's. This national recognition did not go unnoticed by the administration at Elon.

The study at Elon revealed that administrators believed that the exposure received from athletics would bring positive recognition to campus. Administrators at Elon felt that a good Division I program could bring attention to the other organizational changes, similar to the national exposure provided to other private schools. It also became clear that administrators believe that it is possible for Elon to be successful at Division I, like other private schools, and get the same national exposure.

The process to move from NAIA to the NCAA Division I level began differently from other schools that chose to move to Division I because Elon moved from the NAIA to the NCAA Division II. This was due to the fact that the South Atlantic Conference voted to apply for membership into the NCAA. Rather than move to Division II as an institution, the South Atlantic Conference applied as a conference, which is unconventional.

The method of moving to Division I selected by Elon administrators is different than other institutions in that other institutions begin the process and continuously transition to Division I with temporary stops in Division III or II. Elon spent time in Division II, along with other members of the South Atlantic Conference and later decided that Division I would be a better fit for the institution. Elon administrators spoke informally with constituents but made the decision among the administration and the institution's Board of Trustees. The limited involvement in the decision made the process relatively quiet with very little negative response. Although the NCAA has a procedure for getting to Division I in a limited amount of time, Elon chose to stay in Division II longer and felt that, for their institution, the methodical approach to moving to Division I was best.

Once Elon had made the move to Division I, it went from an independent athletic program, to a member of the Big South Conference, and then finally to the Southern Conference. The final move to the Southern Conference was viewed as the perfect fit for Elon. Administrators spoke at great length about how pleased they were to be associated

with the schools in the Southern Conference. Subjects discussed the membership to the Southern Conference as the “real beginning” to Division I.

This aspect of the case study underscored the importance of conference membership in Division I. Being in the Southern Conference allowed Elon administrators to feel as though their overall goal of improving peer association had been accomplished; something that could not be stated if Elon remained in the Big South Conference or had no conference affiliation. It also suggested that just achieving Division I status is not as beneficial as some may think. Administrators stated that they did not think their constituency reacted to Division I games against schools in the Big South, but had hoped that over time the rivals in the Southern Conference would generate strong interest. Comments made indicate that administrators place an emphasis on conference affiliation in Division I and not just achieving Division I status.

The changes to Elon University have been numerous over the last two decades, as well as in the Division I era (since 1997). Because many of the changes occurred before the move to Division I, or were in the process of being completed, administrators could not indicate how much the move to Division I impacted changes to the organization and its constituency. Data show the student body has improved academically, and based on the number of applicants, Elon has become a popular college of choice for academically talented students. Subjects could not agree, however, on how much moving to Division I affected students’ decision to choose Elon. All subjects felt that it would have some impact because intercollegiate athletics is one part of student life, and student life is one factor that students examine when choosing schools.

The faculty have also changed but subjects did not feel that the change was a direct result of the move to Division I. Some subjects indicated that faculty who wish to be a part of the Elon culture, may use Division I athletics as a “tiebreaker” but could not imagine that Division I athletics would influence faculty. It would appear that other issues are more important to faculty and their employment at Elon.

The alumni have become more involved in the athletic programs, and subjects felt that it was because of the Division I atmosphere created by having an on-campus football stadium and competing at the Division I level. However, all of the credit to stronger alumni support cannot be given to just the move. The study revealed several other issues that require attention.

First, Elon may still be in the “honeymoon” phase of reclassification, as alumni may be supporting the potential of the athletic program, rather than the realistic success. Elon has had limited Division I success, therefore, it is not possible to explain increased alumni support in relation to winning. Second, Elon’s alumni base, most of who are still relatively young, are now approaching an age when giving back financially is possible. The alumni base is wealthier now than in the past because alumni consist of the students that were recruited from middle to high incomes in years prior. Since the reclassification, Elon has hired additional alumni and development personnel to work specifically with athletics. All of these are factors need to be considered in assessing the impact of Division I on alumni giving. Finally, the University, not just the athletic department, is more aggressive in getting alumni involved and has given the alumni reason to be proud of the alma mater. In addition to a Division I athletics program, Elon can boast of

academic successes, new academic and student life programs, better facilities, and a beautiful campus, all of which are important factors to alumni giving.

Research gathered did suggest that the athletic department has been impacted by the move to Division I, as expected. The athletic product has become more entertainment driven, the student-athletes are more talented athletically and continue to do well in the classroom, coaches have changed considerably as more coaches with “Division I experience” have been hired to coach at Elon, facilities have been improved, and even the mascot has changed names. However, deeper meanings in some of the athletic department changes have been uncovered. For instance, some subjects close to the hiring and firing of coaches spoke about the difficulty in the change of personnel. One of the difficulties that subjects addressed was the termination of coaches that were part of the institution’s culture and were active in the community, but are no longer part of the University because of their inability to win. Some subjects talked about the sacrifices that past coaches had to make during the transition, when more often than not their teams were playing against, and losing to, better competition with bigger operational budgets and more scholarship opportunities. Other subjects talked about the new Division I coaches who sometimes struggle to be a part of the Elon community and in response attempt to force their individual philosophy on the institution rather than adjusting to the Elon beliefs. The conversation with Elon administrators uncovered a deeper problem area that may not be apparent to other schools that are attempting to reclassify. In most organizational changes, including moving to Division I, individuals are impacted; however, many times the change in the individual goes unnoticed due to the attention

given to the larger organizational change. However, because many of the coaches are recognizable and in some cases, popular, the change to the athletic personnel can be very public.

Lastly, the change in institutional philosophy and Elon's commitment to winning were discussed. The research suggested that the institutional philosophy changed since the mid 1980's. The transformation is due to the organizational change in the University's philosophy to be, as one subject stated, "an excellent school for excellent students"; a different philosophy than in the 1970's. The move to Division I athletics was a part of that philosophy of excellence.

Conversations about the commitment to winning produced similar answers, all centered on the idea about "being competitive". Subjects could not state emphatically that winning is more important now as a Division I institution than the NAIA days. Subjects generally examined the topic from two points of view: (1) an athletics perspective that suggested winning is always important regardless of what level; and (2) an institutional perspective in which subjects felt that winning now has more value because more is at stake (such as the University profile, athletic reputation, ticket sales, student interest, donations). The significance of the responses is that it appears administrators believed that much of the success in realizing any gains from being Division I would at least require teams to be competitive and eventually win games. Administrators acknowledged that it is important to win Southern Conference Championships but understood that NCAA Championships, with the exception of football, is a near impossibility. Also, there appears to be an admission that winning and

losing, and the rationale for supporting athletic programs, has a far greater impact than just athletics.

Interpretations of these study findings add to previous research in the areas of athletics, higher education, and organizational structure in many ways. The following section will provide support from studies in these respective areas as they relate to this study's findings.

### Previous Research

This study adds to the limited literature on the reclassification of athletic departments in that it supports past research (Cross, 1999; Schwarz, 1998; Tomasini, 2003) in the field of Division I reclassification that suggests it is not uncommon to upgrade the athletics program to Division I in order to generate publicity and create awareness. Most relevant is the case study analysis performed by Cross, in which three public universities stated that the rationale for moving to Division I was, in part, to address the lack of awareness by each institutions' external constituencies. More specifically, Cross cited "competitiveness, improved image and enhanced exposure" as rationale for some universities to transition to Division I (p. 196).

The case study supports Schwarz's (1998) study that found schools that have reclassified from Division III or II to I did so because of philosophical factors, such as the institutional philosophy toward intercollegiate athletics, and behavioral factors such as the support of the president and athletic director toward the reclassification.

Results dispute, however, Tomasini's (2003) findings that schools that reclassified to Division I-AA from a lower level between 1993-1999 did not find a

significant positive difference in incoming freshman applications, undergraduate enrollment, donations to the university general fund, attendance at home football games, and corporate sponsorship revenue in the first three years following reclassification. However, the dispute may be due to the fact that UNCG and Elon were both examined for longer than the three year period used by Tomasini.

The study is also significant because it adds to the research of other disciplines. First, the study addresses organizational change in higher education and thus adds to the volumes of literature devoted to organizational change theory and higher education administration. Specifically focusing on Pettigrew's conceptual framework, the study extends the use of the framework outside of the business structure (Nelson, 2003; Pettigrew, 1985, 1987; Pettigrew & Whipp, 1991) and into intercollegiate athletics and higher education. The framework is flexible enough to gather and examine data about a large, comprehensive organizational change, yet data can also be analyzed into each of the three elements, all while maintaining the integrity of the larger organizational change. Because of this, this study was able to: 1) clarify the context in which two institutions reclassified to Division I; 2) explain the process in which the two institutions reclassified and the roles that different constituents played as the process unfolded and; 3) identify areas in which the institutions and its constituencies have changed as a result of the reclassification. In addition, it was also able to provide data on the relationship between an institution's athletic department and other areas of campus.

The context construct examined numerous environments that impacted the decision to reclassify. The results of the case studies indicate that the decision to

reclassify was heavily influenced by several factors, particularly external environments that continue to emphasize the growth in college athletics. The move to Division I at UNCG and Elon supports the abundant publications related to the growing emphasis of intercollegiate athletics within the higher education environment. Coakley (2001), Davies (1994), Eitzen (1989); Eitzen and Sage (2003), Gerdy (1997; 2003), Sack (2003), have all examined the nation's increasing time and resources spent on sport, and specifically college athletics. Bowen and Levin (2003), Chu (1989), and Sperber (1990; 2000), have dedicated books to the relationship of higher education and college athletics and stress their concerns for the overemphasis of Division I athletics. Specifically, the study supports literature that suggests within an ultra competitive higher education and college athletics context, schools are continuously marketing Division I athletics as a way to gain institutional recognition. In addition, the study adds to the literature examining the high levels of competition found in each environment due primarily to the never ending quest to reach higher levels in the classification systems used in higher education and college athletics.

College athletics and higher education environments discussed in the results section of each case indicate that UNCG and Elon reacted in similar fashion, based on the higher education and college athletic context, in order to improve their institutional profile. The trend for athletic programs to reclassify suggests that schools are becoming more similar in their vision to be the best, as each school aspires to athletic success at Division I, and each school hopes that Division I athletic success translates into other institutional measures of success. The need to place schools in athletic classification

categories (Division I-A, I-AA, I-AA, II, III), indicating that one is better than the other, is similar to classification categories long used in other aspects of higher education, such as research classifications (Carnegie Classifications) and accreditations.

This belief that reclassifying to the highest level, Division I, would help legitimize the institution is similar to the Upward Drift phenomenon discussed in higher education literature. The Upward Drift phenomenon, used by Clark Kerr (1991) to describe institutions' never ending quest to improve their ranking in research, created an environment in which "all 2,400 non-specialized institutions of higher learning in the United States aspire to higher things" (p 8). Although Kerr used the description to identify a trend with institutions improving their research, the description could also apply to the reclassification trend in college athletics.

The connection between the rise in athletic classifications and academic prestige was deeply explored by Sperber (2000). The UNCG and Elon case studies uncover similar findings to Sperber (2000), although the types of schools investigated are different. Sperber focuses his study on a group of institutions he labels "Big-Time U", which are major Division I athletic programs constantly working toward bigger and better research and athletic programs. He describes these schools using the following characteristics:

...they had large and influential collegiate subcultures, flourishing intercollegiate athletic departments, well-earned reputations as party schools, and administrators who emphasized research and graduate programs over undergraduate education ones. (p. 47)

Sperber suggests “Big-Time U’s” are schools that have created a “scam” by using Division I college athletics as a deliberate sales strategy to sell potential students on the college experience (p. 53). Sperber suggests the marketing scam is that Big-Time U sells the social atmosphere, which is centered on athletics, to prospective students while rarely discussing the undergraduate academic programs of the institution, which he believes has gotten increasingly weaker. Essentially, a good college experience for students is participation in the Division I athletics “circus”, not the academic learning experience. This circus environment is accepted because it distracts students from the reality that these universities are more interested in their quest to get to the highest research classification possible, not in educating.

Although neither UNCG nor Elon are schools that fit into the profile of “Big-Time U”, each school provided rationale for the move based on the concept that a Division I athletic program would help market the institution. A closer examination of each school reveals areas that would enhance Sperber’s analysis.

The characteristics of “Big-Time U” identified by Sperber (2000) is very similar to the *rationale* provided by administrators at UNCG. Administrators believed that by emphasizing and marketing Division I athletics, student life would improve, donations would increase and the graduate program would be strengthened. The major difference between “Big Time U” and UNCG is that UNCG, although a Division I member, has not achieved notoriety as a “Big-Time” athletics program. Data suggested that the lack of attention to the athletic program may be a significant reason for UNCG falling short on some of the objectives for reclassification. Therefore, it would be wrong to suggest that

UNCG is identical to Sperber's "Big-Time U" institutional profile. However, utilizing Sperber's description for Big-Time U, similarities between the *rationale* for marketing Division I athletics exists between Big-Time U schools and UNCG.

The findings from the case study also suggest that schools similar to UNCG, outside of the major Division I programs described by Sperber, are also guilty of the behavior associated with Upward Drift through Division I athletics. However, because UNCG is not a big-time Division I athletic program, it has not been identified as a school caught in the chase of Big-Time U. Therefore, the case study proposes a new category of universities to be studied, "Reclassification U". Schools that fall into "Reclassification U", similar to UNCG, are schools that *hope the reclassification would bring*: large and influential collegiate subcultures, flourishing intercollegiate athletic departments, well-earned reputations as party schools (or at the very least a strong student life), and administrators who emphasized research and graduate programs over undergraduate education ones.

Cross (1999) and Sperber (2000) both identified the University of Buffalo (UB) as a school that has similar aspirations to those found in the UNCG case study, and because UB offers Division I-A football, it may be more similar to the "Big-Time U" philosophy. Certainly the relationship of reclassification of Division I and the overall improvement of campus life and academic programs at other state universities is an area that needs further exploration.

Examining Elon's rationale from a "Reclassification U" perspective also adds an intriguing element to the category, simply due to Elon's current institutional profile.

Most athletic department studies, even outside of the reclassification, examine large, Division I public institutions. Very little research, in particular, qualitative research, explores the inner workings of a private institution's athletic program. Therefore, this case study adds to the overall understanding of the athletic department's role at a private school.

More specifically, the case study examines the "why" from a private school perspective. The rationale was an institutional decision, not an athletic decision, to improve Elon's association with peer institutions in Division I. The improvement administrators were seeking is very similar to the underlying philosophy of Kerr's "Upward Drift" mentality, used to describe schools that want to achieve a higher status. Although Elon does not place much emphasis on graduate and research programs, it would appear that status is very important to many of the administrative decisions at Elon, including athletics. The case study at Elon indicates that private schools that do not have the desire or ability to raise their status via research programs, may in fact use other programs, such as athletics, to improve their institutional profile. Data in this study suggested that Upward Drift has moved far beyond Kerr's and Sperber's assessments of only impacting research universities or "Big-Time" Division I athletic programs. Based on the rationale given by the two institutions, Upward Drift, specifically through reclassification of the athletic program, extends to schools with varied profiles outside of Big Time Division I.

The rationale for emphasizing athletics is important, and certainly the increased emphasis of athletics at UNCG and Elon would add to the research that suggests higher

education administrators at many schools are putting more university resources into creating larger athletic programs. However, Gerdy (2002) believes this phenomenon of the “lure of the big-time,” with its big money and high visibility, can be overpowering; often causing even the most-experienced leaders to lose perspective (p. 34).

Results from the case studies suggest that schools, and more specifically athletic departments, are changing to look like other successful Division I institutions. UNCG and Elon administrators both used examples of other schools that each would like to imitate – (North Carolina State schools, and Davidson, Wofford, Furman, and Richmond, respectively). Thus, success would be measured by completion of the reclassification process and an image similar to these other schools. UNCG and Elon administrators felt that if their athletic department could be like other “legitimate” schools, then a stronger sense of belonging would occur. The study suggests that reclassification, similar to the other classification processes results in an isomorphic behavior that is causing an upward trend to Division I. The result of isomorphism has been found in many other studies in higher education (Meyer & Scott, 1991; Morpew & Huisman, 2002; Rusch & Wilber, 2007; and intercollegiate athletics (Cunningham and Ashley, 2001; Danylchuk and Chelladurai, 1999).

In addition, the research suggests that schools are becoming more similar because of the classification systems (Aldersley, 1995) used in higher education to suggest one school is better than another. The most influential classification system is the Carnegie Classification System, which ranks institutions based on research productivity, closely followed by accreditation organizations that award memberships to schools that are

worthy of the classification. Rusch and Wilbur (2007) contend that achieving accreditation for schools is another isomorphic behavior that defines an institution's prestige. A lesser known classification system in higher education circles appears to be Division I athletics.

Data gathered on the process of reclassification is extremely important because there is little to no literature that examines the "how" to reclassify in as great of detail. The study adds to the literature provided by the NCAA to members that are considering reclassification, yet provides a more realistic picture (NCAA online 2005a). This study also highlights how specific constituents impacted the move to Division I, which is information not given by the standards established by the NCAA.

This study did not strongly support current research in the areas of alumni, faculty, student, or administrative changes. However, the case study does continue the examination of the impact of reclassification on the alumni, faculty, students, and administration at institutions that are not major Division I programs, and have not had Division I athletic success on a regular basis. Much of the research (Grimes & Chressanthis, 1994; McCormick & Tinsley, 1990; Hall & Mahoney, 1997; Stinson & Howard, 2004); examined major Division I programs and found that athletic contributions were positively related to winning. Other studies (Baade & Sundberg, 1996; Rhodes & Gerking, 2000, Shulman & Bauer, 2001, suggested that athletic success does not always lead to increased donor giving. Robert Frank, Cornell University economist, suggested that over the long-term, big-time Division I athletics winning will not significantly impact giving, but did concede that winning could increase donations to

athletics in the short-term (NCAA On-line, 2004). Rhoads and Gerking's (2000) 10-year study of 87 NCAA Division IA institutions found that academic tradition and status had a far greater impact on alumni giving than the performance of athletic teams.

Similar to other reclassification studies (Cross, 1999; Schwarz, 1998; Tomasini, 2003), there was no significant evidence to suggest that schools that have reclassified resulted in significant changes in alumni giving. In addition, their studies found little to no impact of the changes on administration, faculty, and students; although the studies did not specifically examine those areas. Interestingly, although Elon has shown significant growth in athletic giving, subjects could not determine if the sole reason for the increase was due to the reclassification. UNCG has not shown significant growth in alumni giving to the University or athletics due to the reclassification.

Research suggests that alumni and city leaders, most often referred to as “boosters”, play a very influential role in college athletics, however, there has been very little attention paid to schools that are reclassifying at a smaller Division I-AA, I-AAA level. Most research focuses on the powerful boosters at major Division I schools. This case study suggests that more attention needs to be given to the role of civic leaders, alumni, and other donors at other levels of the NCAA, as well as schools wishing to reclassify.

The impact on the other areas of the institution was also debated, as there was no significant conclusion provided in either case study. Neither UNCG or Elon subjects were able to conclusively say that University changes were a direct result of the reclassification process. In previous research one of the most debated subject was the

impact of athletic success on academic programs. Recent studies such as Mixon (1995), Mixon, Trevino, & Minto, (2004) and Tucker (2004) did show that athletic success positively impacted academic programs. Rishe (2003) however found no relationship between basketball success variables and the six-year graduation rates of freshman entering in 1988.

Some subjects felt that moving to Division I did help improve the academic programs, others believed it negatively impacted the academics, and in other circumstances, academics were seen as already successful. This study did find however, that university administrators *believed* that moving to Division I would positively impact the university's academic programs. Thus, when providing justification for the reclassification, administrators identified institutional and academic improvements, not only athletic improvements.

The study uncovered numerous ways to measure whether the reclassification was successful. UNCG, for example, has fallen short on a number of its measures, as student apathy remains unchanged, donations to the athletic department have not steadily increased, and fans support has not improved. However, some administrators felt very strongly that if you measured success for what "being Division I" has done for the institution, then the reclassification has been successful. Essentially, using athletic criteria (winning percentage, championships, fan attendance, student support, athletic donations) may be misleading as a way of assessing the role of Division I athletics has played to the larger institutional changes. Subjects indicated that having a Division I athletics program has helped legitimize the institution, which long suffered through an

identity crisis. The findings are similar to those found in Cross (1998), as his study found that schools that reclassified, including UNCG, also used institutional improvements to justify success.

Since moving to Division I, UNCG administrators felt that the institution found its place in the North Carolina State System and created a strong visible profile to potential students, the Greensboro community, and state legislatures. Subjects indicated that the move helped bring attention to the undergraduate and graduate programs that had a long history of being under funded. Finally, the move to Division I helped UNCG create an aesthetically pleasing Division I campus and an improved student experience.

Because Elon is still relatively new to Division I, administrators believed that Elon still has not reached a pinnacle of success. Administrators seem to think that with the recent move to the Southern Conference, increased athletic donations, and a continued emphasis on improving the athletic program, future successes in athletics could be possible. However, similar to UNCG, the goals of the move to Division I were never measured in athletic terminology (winning, fans support, etc), rather in institutional terminology. When asked “why move to Division I?”, subjects continued to discuss the importance of peer association. Elon hoped that the move would allow the institution to be associated with a stronger peer group of institutions. By using this rationale to move to Division I, Elon administrators felt as though the reclassification to Division I has already been a success. Subjects continuously referred to the name recognition Elon receives when it competes against Southern Conference schools such as Davidson, Furman, and Wofford, and against other Division I programs like Wake Forest, UNC-

Chapel Hill, Notre Dame, and Georgetown. Subjects did indicate that at some point, the success of the reclassification would need to be examined from an athletic point of view, more specifically the ability to win.

### Implications

The NCAA has created policies for institutions that wish to move to Division I, with the purposes of clarifying the requirements to meet and sustain Division I membership. A brief examination of the current procedure is helpful. The shift to Division I is not an immediate process. Schools have what the NCAA calls an “exploratory year”, in which there are no major changes and the university is still able to compete at the Division II level. During the exploratory year, an institution must submit a strategic plan that addresses numerous Division I operating principles. The institution would then enter its first transition year, and at that time the institution must comply with all minimum Division I contest and participation requirements, though it will not be required to play a full Division I schedule. Also during the first year, key administrators (chief executive officers, directors of athletics, faculty athletics representatives, senior women administrators and compliance coordinators) must attend the NCAA Convention and orientation meeting. The institution would be ineligible for post-season playoffs for a four-year period. During the second year, the school must be in full compliance with all Division I legislation and membership requirements. Teams will be on a full Division I schedule but still remain ineligible to compete for a championship. The third and fourth transition years, the institution must complete an NCAA certification evaluation visit and self study process evaluation. The school would still be ineligible for a Division I

championship. Finally, five years later, the school would be considered a full-fledged Division I member.

Because of the rigorous five year process, the NCAA policies appear to be sufficient for schools to properly analyze their capabilities to operate as a Division I institution; however institutions need to establish policies about the purpose of intercollegiate athletics within the mission of the institution. Included in the institutional policies must be a clear plan, before an institution reclassifies, on how much support will be provided to establish and maintain a Division I athletic program. The most important policies need to address the long-term financial burden assumed by the institution, the students, and the donors, because it appears a consistent problem in reclassification is the underestimation of the resources needed to *maintain* a Division I program.

Case study subjects and additional data made available indicate that both UNCG and Elon have had annual increases in the athletics budget. In 2005-2006 UNCG budget was \$6,889,171, while Elon's athletic budget was reported at \$10,166,372. Although accurate financial data gathered from athletic departments have been questioned for their authenticity (Zimbalist, 1999; Sperber, 2000), the numbers do provide baseline figures. For the purpose of this study and using the same database, it can be determined that each institutions' athletic budget has increased over the last 3 years, yet appears to be lower than like institutions (see Appendix M) (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2007).

Recently, higher education administrators at schools that are considering the move to Division I have expressed concern about the financial commitment to Division I. For example, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, is considering a move to

Division I and have told the students that if a move to Division I occurs, then student fees will jump from \$124 to \$274 over a three-year period, which would enhance the athletics budget from \$3.2 million to \$5.2 million (Gregorian, 2003). SIUE is following a similar plan used by UNCG over 20 years ago: increase student fees early in the process and then hope outside contributions increase. However, at UNCG the outside contributions have yet to catch up to expectations, leaving the student fees high.

It would be strongly recommended to administrators at SIUE (and other schools considering a move) that policies be in place to examine at what point is there too much burden on the students (and the institution). Higher education administrators cannot afford to make such a financial commitment to athletics without understanding the future trends, beyond the short-term. UNCG has shown that the commitment to student fees has not dropped since the move to Division I, as originally planned. Perhaps policies that would “cap” student fees as a percentage to the overall athletics budget needs to be examined. Policies established before such a move may prevent schools from making a move to Division I that they cannot afford.

Recently, Morris Brown College (MBC) and Birmingham-Southern University, schools that completed the move to Division I in 2001-02, and 2003-04, both have decided that the financial burden to the institution was too great to stay. MBC's athletic department in 2001 spent \$3.5 million against \$1.9 million in revenues. In order for the program just to finish the year, MBC coaches spent thousands of dollars out of their own pocket (Wahl & Dohrman, 2001).

Birmingham-Southern which had experienced athletic success in men's basketball and baseball also declined to stay in Division I specifically because, "The financial performance of our intercollegiate athletics program is substantially below the expectations set when the board approved the move to NCAA Division I," board chairman Jim Stephens said in a statement (Decatur Daily Online, 2006). Northeastern Illinois, which moved to Division I in 1990-1991 completely dropped their athletic program all together in 1998 as a way to eliminate increasing expenses.

A common theme for schools is the public relations boost and improved institutional profile Division I athletics can provide, which some research suggests leads to a stronger student population, increased donations, and more fan support. However, the trend to move to Division I has continued and it may be time for the NCAA to establish new policies about accepting new schools to Division I. Recently, there has been an ongoing conversation among college athletic leaders about establishing a new level of Division I-A schools, separating themselves completely from Division I-AA and I-AAA schools. Administrators would need to closely examine the ramification of such a separation, not just from the perspective of the bigger Division I-A schools, but from the lesser known I-AA and I-AAA schools that benefit from the peer association. Potentially, another categorical separation would cause an even greater and more expensive shift of Upward Drift.

From a practitioner point of view, higher education administrators can benefit from this research, particularly schools that are considering a reclassification similar to the two institutions in this study. The research was specifically designed to study one

public (UNCG) and one private (Elon) institution, one school with (Elon) and without (UNCG) football, large (UNCG) and small (Elon), one with a strong emphasis on research (UNCG), the other with an emphasis on teaching (Elon), with the idea that other schools from different categories are able to find some similarities. This study compiled strengths and weaknesses of the reclassification process in hopes that other schools are able to take advantage of similar opportunities and avoid potential mistakes.

Administrators should also place close attention to the rationale for moving to Division I and the measures used to determine success. Each school used non-athletic rationale in justifying their move to Division I. In the future, administrators need to examine closely these non athletic justifications because athletic justifications do not seem to provide a strong enough rationale. It should also be noted that administrators need to be aware that even non-athletic reasoning, such as decreased student apathy, increased donations, and improved community visibility appear to still be dependent on the ultimate athletic justification – consistent winning in their most visible sports (men’s basketball for both, and football for Elon). Each institution has yet to experience consistent winning in either sport at the Division I level and that may be a strong reason that some non-athletic rationale is slow to respond.

This study provides administrators examples of the importance that relationships have on any organizational change. For example at UNCG the relationship between faculty and administration deteriorated dramatically. The reclassification created instant debate and divided parties; for some constituencies the move was a representation of a larger split in regard to the future of UNCG. When interviewing subjects, many still had

strong opinions and certainly not everyone interviewed agreed with every aspect of the reclassification. For years, Division I athletics became the focal point of the struggles between faculty and administration, and many subjects felt that it may have cost the former Chancellor his job.

At Elon, on the other hand, the faculty-administration relationship was built on a solid foundation of what some subjects labeled “trust”. These feelings helped make the process operate more efficiently. There was some concern about the move to Division I, however the negative responses were limited and subjects interviewed could not identify any pockets of animosity about the move. When asked why, subjects discussed the confidence, which appeared to be mutual between upper administration, middle administration, and faculty. Subjects discussed the move as an administrative decision, in which those administrators “get paid to make those decisions”. Subjects discussed the reclassification as one decision among many decisions that were made to better the future of Elon University. The overall sentiment is that the administration has the institution headed in the right direction. Those most responsible for the move, suggested that they have developed, over time, a trust factor, that has been improved because of other successful moves. Subjects strongly indicated that upper administration built trust even along the process of reclassification by first trying to take care of the academic improvements first (increase faculty pay, build a new library, enhance academic buildings). After those pieces were in place, the decision makers *then* moved to the reclassification of Division I.

From a theoretical point of view, administrators in any higher education department, including athletics, can continue to use Pettigrew's conceptual model adapted for the reclassification of an intercollegiate athletics organization (Appendix D) when examining organizational change. Although broad, the model allows administrators to get a thorough examination of the organizational change itself and the change it has on the institutions and its constituents. Using this model allows researchers and practitioners to work together to better understand organizational change and develop future research.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

Literature on the reclassification to Division I is very limited and needs further exploration. The foundation for further exploration has been laid by using Pettigrew's conceptual framework and the two case studies; continued research on each institution is necessary for truly understanding organizational change at each institution.

For a deeper perspective research should focus more closely on one of the themes identified within one of the three elements of Pettigrew's Contextualist model – context, process, and content. For instance, studies examining the influence of reclassification to Division I on their student's decision for schools, or alumni and fans increasing their support, administrative and faculty on employment is needed.

This study took a very unique approach by examining a private institution. Because information is typically easier to obtain from public institutions, there appears to be a tendency to study public schools. Additionally, in the study of intercollegiate athletic studies, there has been a strong propensity to study Division I-A, public

institutions, or what Sperber calls the “beer and circus schools”. However, there is a trend developing in private institutions that are similar to their “beer and circus” counterparts. Elon, for instance, wants to develop stronger peer associations, a motivation that is similar to UNCG and many other public research institutions. As discussed earlier, the Upward Drift described by Kerr may be happening with the private institutions, not just with a heavy emphasis on research, but rather on other areas such as teaching and student life. Future studies should continue to examine the Upward Drift at private institutions and examine the role intercollegiate athletics plays in that phenomenon.

Research also needs to be conducted on the impact of intercollegiate athletics, when athletic success is non-existent or limited. Studies examining schools that have reclassified are needed. If administrators continue to provide non-athletic rationale as the rationale for improving intercollegiate athletic programs, yet winning is the measure of success, then what goals are achieved when schools do not win? Literature, including this study, indicates that administrators are avoiding the idea that if intercollegiate athletics is going to have an impact then, eventually you have to win. Future research needs to continue to examine the relationship of athletic success and higher education. Do students care when their athletic programs are not competitive, is student life improved when the athletic programs lose, do alumni and the community support the team when the teams consistently fall short?

This type of research would be valuable to schools that are considering reclassification, because during the first phase of reclassification (and possibly beyond)

athletic teams will lose most of their games. Therefore, how can the community, students and other constituents become excited about athletics? If athletics is having little positive impact on the institution, why continue to offer a Division I athletics program. Future research should examine schools that have lost at Division I. Additional research also needs to be conducted from the schools that have moved to Division I and decided that the organizational change did not work (specific examples include: Northern Illinois, Birmingham Southern, and Morris Brown).

Schools that have reclassified to Division I continue to grow. As the number of schools that reclassified increases, research should examine this group longitudinally to gain a perspective on overall organizational change and subsequent success or failure. In depth qualitative studies need to be continued, as well as adding quantitative research beyond financial data. Future research should examine the relationship between winning (perhaps using .500 winning percentage as a dependent variable) and various other independent variables (winning percentage at the lower level, year entering Division I, enrollment, number of coaching changes) to predict future success.

Finally, the study raises an interesting concern about the Division I athletics status. UNCG and Elon both expressed the desire to improve their institutional status by moving to the highest level – Division I. However, if schools from Division II, III and NAIA continue to reclassify to Division I, one could question the impact of the Division I brand. Subjects throughout each study mentioned that a reason for moving to Division I was that they wanted to play against a particular group of schools. However, because the schools they competed against athletically were not in their same division, a move was

necessary. However, if the schools they left in Division II, III, or the NAIA, also make the move to Division I, is the prestige of being Division I lost? For example, UNCG and Elon both reclassified and left other regional schools, such as High Point University, Gardner Webb University, Winston-Salem State University, Longwood University, and Presbyterian University in lower classes. All of the schools mentioned have moved or are moving to Division I. Therefore, is the rationale for leaving a lower level division to Division I now irrelevant when UNCG and Elon competes against one of these schools? Future research needs to address this question because the trend to reclassify to Division I still exists.

### Conclusions

The results of this study provide evidence regarding the role athletics plays in the overall institution for two sponsoring universities. Although the context at each university differed, each relied on the reclassification to influence the institutional profile. At UNCG, a state university struggling with an identity crisis, the move to Division I was thought to be the initial high profile change that would encourage further growth and development. At Elon, the athletic change was an opportunity to upgrade athletics in order to match other institutional changes that occurred previously.

Each institution was influenced by the athletic success of other institutions, which produced a belief that the upgrade would bring recognition to the institution and improve their relations with more prestigious universities. This belief is similar to the Upward Drift phenomenon experienced by schools wanting to improve their institutions by improving their classification.

The process of the move to Division I was a complex progression involving numerous internal and external constituents. Each institution worked within the detailed parameters established by the NCAA, as well as the institution's own procedures for completing the change. The process was much more complicated at UNCG due to the role played by the governing bodies and the procedures that govern a state institution, the outspoken objection by many alumnae and faculty, the reliance on student fees, and the influence of the community leaders. All of these factors made the move to Division I very public and difficult. Elon's process, although time consuming and still somewhat difficult, did not receive serious opposition from its constituency base.

Finally, the study identified areas of change to the organization as a result of the move to Division I. At both schools, the athletic department was changed; however, the impact of the reclassification to other organizational changes is difficult to determine. Subjects believed that changes to the organization such as undergraduate admission standards, improved undergraduate and graduate programs, stronger student life environment, improved institutional profile, increased alumni giving, and stronger community relationships were possible results of the reclassification. These changes appear only to be possible if the Division I athletic program is winning (or consistently competitive) and is gaining public recognition for their achievements. Findings from this study serve as a first step to gaining a better understanding of the impact of reclassification on organizational change of a university. Future research is needed to more clearly elucidate the complexities of reclassification to Division I and to better

understand both the direct and indirect impacts of this process on an institution of higher education.

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**APPENDIX A: SCHOOLS ENTERING DIVISION I 1985-2005**

<u>School</u>	<u>Type/Aff.</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>Ent.</u>	<u>04-05</u> <u>Enroll</u>	<u>High Deg</u>
Alabama A&M	Public	ALA	99-00	6000	Ph.D.
Albany	Public	NY	99-00	16788	Ph.D.
Arkansas - Pine Bluff	Public	ARK	95-96	3100	Master's
Belmont	Private	TN	97-98	3959	Ph.D.
Binghamton	Public	NY	01-02	13880	Ph.D.
Birmingham-Southern	Private / United Methodist	ALA	03-04	1388	Master's
Cal. State Northridge	Public	CAL	90-91	32997	Master's
Cal. State Sacramento	Public	CAL	90-91	27972	Master's
California Poly	Public	CAL	94-95	17000	Master's
California Riverside	Public	CAL	01-02	17104	Ph.D.
Central Connecticut	Public	CT	86-87	12320	Master's
Charleston Southern Univ.	Private / Baptist	SC	87-88	2990	Master's
Coastal Carolina	Public	SC	85-86	7021	Master's
College of Charleston	Public	SC	91-92	10913	Master's
Coppin State	Public / HBCU	MD	85-86	3882	Master's
Denver	Private / Episcopal	CO	98-99	9248	Ph.D.
Elon	Private / United Church of Christ	NC	99-00	4796	Ph.D.
Florida Atlantic	Public	FLA	93-94	27896	Ph.D.
Florida International	Public	FLA	87-88	33319	Ph.D.
Gardner-Webb	Private / Baptist	NC	02-03	3564	Ph.D.
Hampton University	Private / HBCU	VA	95-96	5700	Ph.D.
High Point	Private / United Methodist	NC	99-00	2600	Master's
IPFW	Public	IND	02-03	11755	Master's
IUPUI	Public	IND	98-99	29025	Ph.D.
Jacksonville State	Public / HBCU	ALA	93-94	9061	Master's
Liberty University	Private / Christian	VA	88-89	10642	Ph.D.
Lipscomb	Private / Churches of Christ	TN	99-00	2643	Master's
Morris Brown Univ.	Private / African Methodist	GA	01-02	2785	Bachelors
Mt St Mary's Univ.	Private / Catholic	MD	88-89	2032	Master's
Norfolk State	Public / HBCU	VA	97-98	8000	Ph.D.
Northeastern Illinois	Public	ILL	90-91	7400	Master's
Portland State	Public	OR	98-99	21,348	Ph.D.
Oakland	Public	MI	99-00	16902	Ph.D.
Quinnipiac	Private / Catholic	CT	98-99	6847	Ph.D.

Sacred Heart	Private / Catholic	CT	99-00	6100	Ph.D.
Sam Houston State	Public	TX	87-88	14371	Ph.D.
Savannah State	Public / HBCU	GA	01-02	2500	Master's
Southeast Missouri State	Public	MZ	91-92	9000	Ph.D.
Southeastern Louisiana	Public	LA	03-04	15472	Master's
Southern Utah Univ.	Public	UT	88-89	6672	Master's
Stephen F. Austin	Public	TX	87-88	11408	Ph.D.
Stony Brook	Public	NY	99-00	21685	Ph.D.
Texas A&M CC	Public	TX	98-99	7684	Ph.D.
Troy State Univ.	Public	ALA	93-94	27177	Master's
UC Davis	Public	CAL	03-04	30065	Ph.D.
UMBC	Public	MD	86-87	11852	Ph.D.
UM Kansas City	Public	MZ	89-90	14244	Ph.D.
UNCA	Public	NC	86-87	3348	Master's
UNCG	Public	NC	91-92	14328	Ph.D.
Univ. of Buffalo	Public	NY	91-92	27276	Ph.D.
UT Martin	Public	TN	92-93	5800	Master's
UW Milwaukee	Public	WIS	90-91	24890	Ph.D.
Winthrop University	Public	SC	88-89	6447	Master's
Wofford College	Private / Methodist	SC	95-96	1133	Bachelors
Wright State	Public	OHIO	87-88	16500	Ph.D.

<b>Abbreviation Key</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
School	Name of institution
Type/Aff.:	Identifies school as private or public / Identifies any additional school affiliation
State	Geographical location of the institution
Year Ent.	Year school participated in Division I as a full member
04-05 Enrollment	Entire enrollment for the 2004-2005 academic year
High Deg.	Highest degree offered at the institution

## **APPENDIX B: THE BOWL CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES CRITERIA**

To be eligible to participate in one of the most lucrative bowls, including the national championship game, an institution must meet specific criteria established by an association known as the BCS Founding Members

1. The conference champions of the Atlantic Coast, Big East, Big Ten, Big 12, Pacific-10 and Southeastern Conferences, also known as the BCS Founding Members, are guaranteed berths.
2. All other Division I-A teams that have won at least nine regular season games (not including wins in exempt games) and are ranked among the top 12 in the final BCS standings are eligible for selection as an at-large team.

Therefore, schools classified as Founding Members are guaranteed a spot in the BCS national championship series. As a result the BCS Founding Members are the beneficiary of much of the revenue sources in college football.

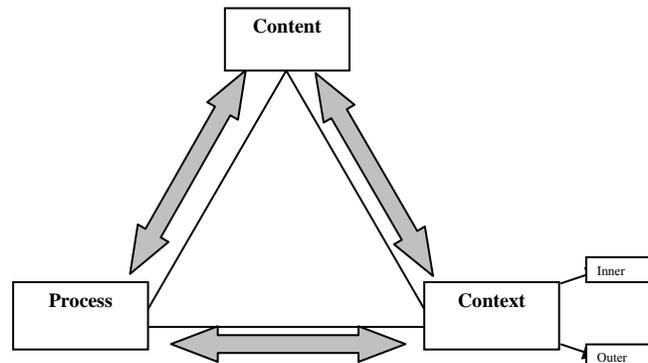
Source: (<http://www.bcsfootball.org>)

**APPENDIX C: EXAMINATION OF REVENUES AND EXPENSES**

<b>Membership</b>	<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Division Rev</b>	<b>Division Exp</b>	<b>Total Surplus (Deficit)</b>
<b>Division I-A</b>				
	2003	\$29,400	\$27,200	\$2,200
	2001	\$25,100	\$23,200	\$1,900
	1999	\$21,900	\$20,000	\$1,900
<b>Division I-AA</b>				
	2003	\$7,200	\$7,500	\$(300)
	2001	\$5,600	\$6,800	\$(1,200)
	1999	\$4,800	\$5,400	\$(600)
<b>Division I-AAA</b>				
	2003	\$6,200	\$6,500	\$(300)
	2001	\$5,100	\$5,500	\$(400)
	1999	\$3,800	\$4,700	\$(900)
<b>Division II</b>				
<b>w/football</b>				
	2003	\$2,600	\$2,700	\$(100)
	2001	\$1,900	\$2,300	\$(400)
	1999	\$1,400	\$2,000	\$(600)
<b>Division II</b>				
<b>w/out football</b>				
	2003	\$1,700	\$1,900	\$(200)
	2001	\$1,200	\$1,600	\$(400)
	1999	\$1,000	\$1,400	\$(400)
<b>Division III</b>				
<b>w/football</b>				
	2003	N/A	\$1,570	N/A
	2001	N/A	\$1,250	N/A
	1999	N/A	\$1,000	N/A
<b>Division III</b>				
<b>w/out football</b>				
	2003	N/A	\$900	N/A
	2001	N/A	\$670	N/A
	1999	N/A	\$530	N/A

Source: Fulks, D. (2003)

**APPENDIX D: CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR RECLASSIFICATION OF AN INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ORGANIZATION\***



**\*Model Adapted from Pettigrew's Contextualist Approach Model to Organizational Change**

**Process: actions, reactions, and interactions from the various interested parties. How do we change?**

- How does a university successfully follow all NCAA procedures related to reclassification?
- How does a university implement a Division I program?
- How did the action/reaction of management/leadership help or hurt the reclassification?
- How did the action/reaction of faculty, students, and other constituencies help or hurt the reclassification?

**Content: aspects of the organization that are being changed. What could change?**

- University status, profile, image
- University mission, focus, emphasis
- University Administration
- The athletic product
- Student-athletes
- Coaches
- Athletic Administration
- Community (alumni involvement, business partnership, local, state, national recognition)
- Faculty/Staff
- Students

**Context:**

**Outer context - social, economic, political, and competitive environment in which the organization operates. Why did these environments influence the decision to reclassify?**

- Higher Education environment
- College athletics environment
- State environment
- City environment
- University environment

**Inner context - organizational elements that influence the change process**

- Why did the University reclassify the athletics program?
- Why was there a need to change the athletics culture?
- Why was there a need to change the University culture?
- Why did the constituency support/reject the change?

## APPENDIX E: PILOT STUDY INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

### Transition to Division I Interview Guide

The questions are broken up into two sections. The first section covers questions *before* the transition and the second set of questions refer to *after* the transition. Information given will remain confidential. When a written dissertation or subsequent Publications are submitted, your name will not be given, and we will not discuss your interview with anyone.

#### Introduction

**Introduce yourself and tell me about your current position**  
**What was your experience at UNCG? When UNCG reclassified to Division I, what was your role in the transition?**

**The purpose of this interview is to better understand UNCG's transition from Division III to Division I.**

#### **Before the transition:**

1. What do you think motivated the change?  
     Was there one person mainly responsible for the change?  
     Why do you think the change was motivated?
2. What were your personal expectations about the transition before it was made?  
     Why did you think this was (or was not) the best strategy for UNCG at that time?  
     What do you think was the university's expectations?  
     Was their resistance on campus? From whom?
3. What did you perceive the benefits to be?
4. What did you perceive the difficulties to be?

#### **After the transition:**

1. What were the benefits of the transition?
2. What were the negatives of the transitions?

3. What was the environment like after the transition?
  - Did the type of student-athlete change?
  - Did the recruiting change?
  
  - Was winning more important?
  - Was athletics more competitive?
4. Did the transition meet your expectations?
5. If you had to give a recommendation to other universities that were thinking of making an upward reclassification in athletics (in this case Division III-I) what advice would you give?
  - Would you recommend the transition?

## APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

### Upward Reclassification to Division I Interview Guide

The questions are broken up into three sections. The first section covers questions *before* the transition, the second set of questions refers to *during* and the third set of questions refer to *after* the transition. Information given will remain confidential. When a written dissertation or subsequent Publications are submitted, your name will not be given, and we will not discuss your interview with anyone.

The purpose of this research is to describe the context in which the reclassification took place, understand the process of reclassifying an athletic department to Division I and its impact on the institution and stakeholders.

#### Introduction

Introduce yourself and tell me about your current position

What was your experience at SCHOOL A? When SCHOOL A reclassified to Division I, what was your role in the transition?

#### Before the transition:

**1. IF THE SUBJECT HAD BEEN AT THE UNIVERSITY BEFORE THE RECLASSIFICATION, ASK THEM**

– Describe what the university was like when you first started here.

**IF NOT AT UNIVERSITY BEFORE RECLASSIFICATION**

- Describe what the university was like before (date of reclassification).

*If they don't describe content and context in their description...LISTEN IN THEIR DESCRIPTION FOR KEYWORDS THAT WILL LEAD TO FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS*

- If necessary, follow up and ask about the environment...at the university, higher ed., state, etc..

- If necessary, follow up about constituents...describe the student body, faculty, leadership.

**2. So why did the reclassification of athletics start becoming a priority? Do you remember the first time you heard about the transition of the athletic department?**

- How did that fit into the university plans at the time?

- How did that fit into the athletic department plans at the time?

**3. What do you think motivated the change? LISTEN...IDENTIFY A MOTIVATION...USE FOLLOW UPS SUCH AS...**

- Was there one person mainly responsible for the change?
- FOLLOW UP IF NOT CLEAR: *Why do you think the change happened?*

4. What were your personal expectations about the transition before it was made?  
Why did you think this was (or was not) the best strategy for SCHOOL A at that time?

- What do you think was the university's expectations?
- Was there resistance on campus? From whom? Why?

5. What did you perceive the benefits and difficulties to be?

6. Did you look at other campuses as models?

#### **During the transition:**

1. What was the reaction to the change on campus?

- Were there any groups that were critical of the change? If so, whom? Why?

2. Were there other organizational changes going on at the same time?

- What kind of priority did the reclassification receive on campus? How did this fit in with other changes at the time?

#### **After the transition:**

1. What was the environment like after the transition?

- Did the students, faculty, administrators change? Was that change related to the transition?
- Did the type of student-athlete change?
- Did the recruiting change?
- Is winning in athletics more important?

2. What were the benefits or shortcomings of the transition?

3. Did the transition meet your expectations?

- Is the reclassification successful only if the athletic programs win?

4. If you had to give a recommendation to other universities that were thinking of making an upward reclassification in athletics what advice would you give?

- Would you recommend the transition?

CLOSE WITH AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE SUBJECT TO SPEAK FREELY ON ANY TOPIC THAT WAS NOT COVERED. REVIEW QUESTIONS. CLARIFY.

Additional questions

- Ask about the Division I brand? Is it watered down?

**APPENDIX G: OBSERVATION FORM  
CRESWELL (1998)**

Sample observation notes about UNCG Athletics on-campus presence. (10/2003)

<b>OBSERVATIONS</b>	<b>DESCRIPTIONS</b>
1. Outdoor facilities are beautiful	Examined the baseball and soccer stadium which are in a very popular part of campus...the grounds are eye-catching and to a person who appreciates the greenery of the stadiums...They are beautiful. Perhaps one of the nicest soccer stadiums in the country. Same for the baseball stadium – although there maybe bigger, not sure there is much better...very appealing. Tennis courts – in a really active part of campus which is unusual most schools place tennis courts in the distance. Lots of them too!
2. Some outdoor stadiums are missing	Can't help but notice that there is no softball, football stadium – no track. Not sure where they would fit. Plans for softball stadium next to the soccer stadium – seems crowded, but again, it would be powerful.
3. Outdoor fields - Location!!!	Stadiums are off of Aycock Street – a lot of cars go right by the stadiums. See the scoreboards, green grass, games etc...not sure the impact.
4. Indoor facilities lacking	The gym is just lacking...no impact, no wow factor – Division III gym. Weight room is worse. Just too small. The athletic department is in the HHP building, which is an academic building, so there is just little to no athletic presence, let alone a “Division I athletic presence”. You could walk right by Fleming Gym and not even know what it is. Just needs a major upgrade....this would not be an easy sell recruiting.
5. Spartans logos	Looking around campus – there is virtually no athletic logos, or schools colors....street signs on campus aren't blue and gold – they are maroon...no Spartan logos on building, roads, etc...a visitor would not be able to tell the school colors, mascot, etc...

## APPENDIX H: SAMPLE CODED TRANSCRIPTION

*Q: When you guys were making the transition, were there any schools where you said we would like to be that school or that university? Did you ever compare yourselves to another school that Elon would be playing in 2006?*

**A: I said this hundreds of times and I will continue to say it, the real school I was looking at was Furman, Richmond, and Wake Forest.**

**RESEARCH NOTES: TWO ANSWERS COMPARE ELON TO OTHER PRIVATE SCHOOLS. ADD TO HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT – ELON HOPES TO BE COMPARED TO FURMAN, RICHMOND, WAKE, GONZAGA – ALL HAVE ALSO EXPERIENCED ATHLETIC SUCCESS.**

*Q: What about those schools when you look at them?*

**A: I think of them academically and I think of them athletically. But you know the perfect image of a school is Gonzaga. Anybody knows Gonzaga, why do they know Gonzaga? I tell you what, they got a great history program because their basketball team is good, it is perceptions. It is just a perception, they are a winning team that is what attracts students, I mean really looked at I would like to get to the Furman level, the Richmond level, and the Wake Forest level. I do not want to be just exactly like those schools but it would be nice to be mentioned in the same breath.**

*Q: A lot of people here have been saying I have heard this phrase was that you want to be judged by the company you keep. And the company you kept was not where you want to be associated with.*

**A: You are who you play; I mean you are who you play with. If in the paper Elon loses to Davidson that is ok. If in the paper Elon loses to the little sisters of the poor, that is who Elon is associated with, and my line has always been you are who you play with.**

**RESEARCH NOTES: ALSO, CONTEXT – COMMENTS ABOUT HOW ATHLETICS IS VIEWED BY PUBLIC?? PERCEPTION IS REALITY?**

*Q: Do you see the students change because of athletics, but it might not be because of one change or can you pinpoint that?*

**A:** I have seen the students change just because the school has changed. We used to serve great kids, and we serve great kids now but it is a different atmosphere. Not that one is any better than the other. The athletes now are bigger, stronger and I remember when Alan White took us to the Big South Basketball Conference Tournament and this is when we were processing through everything about are we going to division one or not and the Big South was our option. I think it served us wonderfully, we went up to Liberty to watch the basketball tournament there and I just told him these guys are bigger, faster and stronger than us. And now we are just as big and fast and strong as any of the athletes in the Southern Conference. So they have gotten bigger, faster, and stronger.

**RESEARCH NOTES: SECTION IS DEVOTED TO THE CHANGE IN STUDENTS, SPECIFICALLY STUDENT-ATHLETES. ADD NOTES TO THE CONTENT SECTION.**

*Q: I know when you guys moved from NAIA to Division II, was there ever any conversation about either you or anyone about what if we went division three?*

**A:** I think your example of the school that did that was Guilford. When I went to school Guilford was NAIA and they had some good basketball players and they had some good teams...they went the opposite way. I would often question that decision. It is just different, Division III never came up. It just wasn't a good fit for what we were trying to do.

**RESEARCH NOTES: THIS SECTION EXAMINES PROCESS AND CONTEXT. LEADERSHIP'S DECISION NOT TO GO TO DIII. AND ALSO A COMPARISON TO A FORMER LOCAL RIVAL – GUILFORD.**

**Key**

Red lettering	Answer is coded "Context"
Blue lettering	Answer is coded "Process"
Green lettering	Answer is coded "Content"
Yellow highlight	Answer has more than one designation.

**APPENDIX I. THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT  
GREENSBORO'S SCHOOLS (2005-06)**

The College of Arts and Sciences  
The Joseph M. Bryan School of Business and Economics  
The School of Education  
The School of Health and Human Performance  
The School of Human Environmental Sciences  
The School of Music  
The School of Nursing

### **APPENDIX J. THE ELEVATION OF UNCG**

The chart below describes that in the years 1986-87, 1987-88 UNCG Division III teams played under the stricter Division II rules. In 1989-1990 and 1990-1991, UNCG Division II teams played under the stricter Division I rules. In 1991-1992, UNCG reached full membership in Division I.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Rules followed</b>	<b>Membership</b>
1986-1987	Division II rules	Division III
1987-1988	Division II rules	Division III
1988-1989	Division II rules	Division II
1989-1990	Division I rules	Division II
1990-1991	Division I rules	Division II
1991-1992	Division I rules	Division I

Source: UNCG – The Blue Book, 1992

**APPENDIX K: SCHOOLS UNCG ADMINISTRATION VISITED**

<b>School</b>	<b>Date Visited</b>
University of Alabama at Birmingham	January 27-28, 1986
Florida International University	February 24, 1986
University of South Florida	February 26, 1986
University of Tampa	February 26, 1986
James Madison University	March 5, 1986
Old Dominion University	March 6, 1986
University of North Carolina at Wilmington	May 6, 1986
East Carolina University	May 7, 1986

### **APPENDIX L. THE ELEVATION OF ELON UNIVERSITY**

Elon has sponsored varsity athletic programs since 1900, competing at the NAIA Division I level through the spring of 1991, before moving to NCAA Division II. Elon stayed in Division II for six years before becoming a provisional member of Division I. In 1999, Elon received full Division I membership.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Conference</b>
Prior 1991	NAIA Division I	North State Conference (1930-1961) Carolinas Conference (1961-1975)
1991-1997	NCAA Division II	South Atlantic Conference (1991-1997)
1997-2003	NCAA Division I (I-AA in football)	Big South Conference (1997-2003) Division I-AA Independent in football (1997-2003)
2003-Present	NCAA Division I (I-AA in football)	Southern Conference (2003-Present)

**APPENDIX M: FINANCIAL DATA COMPARISON**

<b>School</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
UNCG	\$3,780,572	\$5,792,609	\$6,889,171
Similar Division I- AAA institutions (44 schools)	\$7,418,858	\$8,501,219	\$9,301,303

Source: Office of Postsecondary Education, 2007

<b>School</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
Elon	\$6,426,438	\$6,101,951	\$10,166,372
Similar Division I- AA institutions (47 schools)	\$9,005,726	\$9,856,072	\$11,073,101

Source: Office of Postsecondary Education, 2007