

Examining the Potential Inclusion of Adaptive Sport in the NCAA

MBA Major Research Paper

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Executive Summary

The central research question of this study is to investigate if there is a case for the inclusion of adaptive sport in the NCAA. This study is important because of issues of equity, the sociocultural perceptions of disability and adaptive sport, the physical, social, psychological, and societal benefits of sport participation, and recent education and employment-population ratio statistics in the United States. Supporting this central question are five inquiries (the dependent variables of the study): What are the barriers and challenges for collegiate adaptive sport? What are the growth opportunities for collegiate adaptive sport? What are goals for the future of collegiate adaptive sport? What are integration strategies for collegiate adaptive sport in the NCAA? Is sport a major life activity?

Based on the literature, four themes stand out regarding the advancement of collegiate adaptive sport. First, there are legal aspects such as Title IX, the Rehabilitation Act, and Americans with Disabilities Act that shape the current landscape of collegiate adaptive sports. Second, the greatest momentum for change in the NCAA could come from institutions and conferences taking a leadership role in championing change and pressuring the interdependent network of the NCAA. Third, the experience of females in collegiate athletics could be used to understand some of the challenges for adaptive sport and the top-down initiatives that could help the growth of adaptive sport. Fourth, the advancement of adaptive sport will require change in the current system and the critical change factor model by Fay (1999) can be used as a framework to understand what change factors could be effective.

The research question was examined through qualitative interviews with stakeholder groups affiliated with the landscape of collegiate adaptive sport. These groups included collegiate adaptive sport athletes (A), collegiate adaptive sport staff (B), athletic department staff (C), and external organizations (e.g. national governing sport bodies) (D). The interviews were thematically analyzed to yield key themes and recommendations as they pertained to the dependent variables. There were 38 participants in the study with 3, 21, 8, and 6 people from groups A through D respectively.

NCAA status for adaptive sport was found to be a desirable goal for the future and there are frameworks that can make it possible (e.g. the ECAC Inclusive Sport model). However, there must be a critical mass of adaptive sport athletes, a growth of and greater concentration of programming at the collegiate level and more purposeful and effective support from the top-down. Recommendations for how stakeholders could collaborate to grow adaptive sport at the collegiate level include:

- Invest in K to 12 adaptive sport programming
- Educate senior leaders of institutions and organizations about disability and adaptive sport
- Create a resource guide for NCAA institutions for adaptive athlete recruitment and training
- Develop an “Emerging Adaptive Sports” program in the NCAA
- Create a Senior Disability or Inclusion Administrator designation for athletic departments
- Expand on the ECAC Inclusive Sport Principles 1 through 3 to other conferences
- Implement able-body inclusion and consider coed teams in collegiate wheelchair basketball

Recommendations for future research include examining effects of K-12 programming on participation levels in adaptive sport, adaptive athlete perceptions of able-body participation in adaptive sport, the appropriate number of sponsors for an “Emerging Adaptive Sports” program, the qualitative and quantitative impact that collegiate adaptive sports programs have on their institutions, further research on sport as a major life activity, adaptive athlete experiences on coed teams, and key leader perceptions (e.g. Athletic Directors) of disability and adaptive sport.

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Part I. Introduction

Since 1906, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has acted in an ongoing process to maintain order, governance, and authority over collegiate athletics in the United States. The NCAA prioritizes supporting the well-being of, fairness, and academics for student athletes within its system (NCAA, 2020a). A layer of complexity with regards to its governance is that its policies are member driven by conferences, committees, and member schools. As a result, accountability for how the NCAA operates lies within those existing relationships.

The central research question of this paper is to investigate if there is a case for the inclusion of adaptive sport in the NCAA. This study is important because of issues of equity, the sociocultural perceptions of disability and adaptive sport, the physical, social, psychological and societal benefits of sport participation, and recent education and employment-population ratio statistics in the United States.

Apart from a small number of Paralympic level athletes that compete alongside their able-bodied peers, and the endorsement of the Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference (ECAC) Inclusive Sport Initiative (refer to Appendix A), the NCAA does not actively lead, create nor sanction adaptive sport competition (leagues, events, matches or championships) (Gurney, Lopiano & Zimbalist, 2017). One of the NCAA's five core areas of inclusion is "Disability" (refer to Appendix B), and the lack of opportunity in adaptive sport gives rise to the question of whether the NCAA fully and effectively meets the needs of student athletes with physical disabilities and whether the NCAA is truly an equitable governing organization for collegiate student athletics in the United States. Due to the lack of opportunity in adaptive sport in the NCAA, there is reason to believe that the NCAA is not fulfilling the three pillars of well-being, fairness, and academics, to the best of their ability.

Organizations that have the extent of control in their domain that the NCAA has in college sports must be held accountable for their actions and policies. They are key players when it comes to socializing and institutionalizing values in society. This becomes particularly important in a domain like sport which has historically played a significant role in establishing and negotiating social and moral values in society. As a result, it is imperative to scrutinize the legitimacy of governing organizations and the hegemony they produce. Morally and legally, it is not just to exclude people based on their physical ability or deny them the benefits of services

and activities that others have access to. Therefore, it is important to understand the landscape of adaptive sport in the collegiate system and necessary to understand how to impart change to create equal opportunity.

The central research question will be addressed in the background (Part II) using four perspectives. First, the background will identify applications of Title IX, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act to understand the landscape of adaptive sports in the NCAA. Second, the application of theories of legitimacy and accountability to the NCAA as a governing organization of collegiate sports in the United States. The NCAA prioritizes the academics, well-being, and fairness for college athletes, however, by not taking an active role in supporting adaptive athletes and sports, its legitimacy and accountability must be examined as they are a key player in socializing and institutionalizing values in American society. This topic will be approached from a governance perspective to examine the structure of the NCAA, its claims to legitimacy and opportunities to impart change. Third, review and identify the barriers, challenges, and pathways female athletics took as it grew in the NCAA to understand transferrable lessons for adaptive sport. Fourth, examine the current state of affairs in adaptive sport programs that exist in United States colleges. This analysis will help to determine what challenges, barriers, strengths, and opportunities exist for adaptive sport programs that must be addressed to precede full support from the NCAA. Furthermore, it will be important to assess current implementation of adaptive sports at the collegiate level to determine best practices and opportunities to integrate with existing sport infrastructure. The answers to these inquiries should facilitate more effective adoption into the NCAA if it is indeed a viable and desirable pathway for adaptive sports in the future.

As stated previously, the central question is whether there is a case for adaptive sport inclusion in the NCAA. Supporting this central question are five inquiries with the intent to identify what the future development of adaptive sport could look like and if that fits with the NCAA. First, what are the barriers and challenges for collegiate adaptive sport? Second, what are the growth opportunities for collegiate adaptive sport? Third, what are goals for the future of collegiate adaptive sport? Fourth, what are integration strategies for collegiate adaptive sport in the NCAA? Fifth, is sport a major life activity? Qualitative interviews with different stakeholders in collegiate adaptive sports will be used to conduct this research.

Part II will begin by discussing the importance of this study. It will then review the literature that provides the foundation for this study. Topics that will be examined include the legal landscape in the United States with regard to physical disability and sport, legitimacy of the NCAA, the inclusion of female athletics in the NCAA and the current landscape of collegiate adaptive sports in the United States. Following the background, Part III will present the research approach, hypotheses and methodology. Part IV will present the results from the study. Part V will discuss the results, major themes and recommendations. Part VI will discuss the limitations of the study and Part VII will recommend future research based on the results and findings. Part VIII discusses the concluding remarks for the study.

Part II. Background

Importance of Study

Before reviewing the literature to support the foundations of this study, it is necessary to illustrate the importance of this research. This study is important because of issues of equity, the physical, social, psychological and societal benefits of sport participation and recent education and employment-population ratio statistics in the United States.

Equity

The lack of support for adaptive sports by the NCAA and its member institutions results in inequitable access to fundamental social and educational experiences through sport opportunities. Inequity exists because student athletes use sport as an opportunity to access post-secondary education and persons with a disability face several barriers in accessing these opportunities. First, there are proportionally fewer opportunities for persons with a physical disability to compete at a collegiate level when compared to persons with no disability based on a population to program ratio. Based on the 2011-2015 American Community Survey Five Year Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, for the age range of 5-17 years old in the United States, there were approximately 2.9 million persons living with a disability and 50.8 million persons without a disability (Disabled World, 2020). There are 1,113 colleges in the NCAA, and 21 of which have some form of adaptive sport programming (NCAA, 2020b; AbleThrive, 2016). That means, there are approximately 45,643 persons without a disability for every college in the NCAA, and 138,096 persons with a disability for every collegiate adaptive sport program. Second, of the adaptive sport programs that do exist, there are limited opportunities for scholarships and financial support for student athletes with physical disabilities because of the

lack of institutional financial support they receive for their programming. Third, due to the limited opportunities available for adaptive sport, the geographic locations of these schools create another barrier because student athletes must pay out of state tuition prices. The lack of support from the NCAA and its member institutions potentially plays a role in creating or maintaining these sources of inequity.

Physical, Social, Psychological and Societal Benefits of Sport

The benefits of sport physically are well documented. For example, engagement in physical activity can result in the reduction of anxiety and depression, reduce the risk of chronic disease, build stronger muscles, and prevent obesity (Shephard, 1991; Pedersen & Febbraio, 2012). While the physical benefits of sport cannot be overstated, the psychological and social benefits must be examined because of the greater societal impacts they can have.

The opportunity to compete in collegiate athletics can be a formative experience for individuals. According to a study by Chen, Snyder and Magner (2010), there is a self-perceived positive image that comes with the student athlete title. Furthermore, the participants somewhat agreed with the health benefits, work ethic, self-esteem, cultural acceptance and overall development that resulted from their participation in collegiate athletics (Chen et al., 2010). There are also the added benefits that come with student athlete status such as career services, tutoring and additional services that can help student athletes excel beyond the playing field (Chen et al., 2010). However, one of the fundamental formative experiences one gains access to through post-secondary education, is the skill-set to be proficient in work, life and be a responsible citizen (Chunoo & Osteen, 2016). The inequity in opportunity to participate in adaptive athletics at the collegiate level, coupled with the potential forgone benefits that accompany that experience, necessitate examination to understand how it can be resolved. One such way is to examine the role that the NCAA and its member institutions play, actively or passively, in creating and maintaining existing inequities.

The transferrable skills attained through sport participation can yield positive outcomes for the individual and society. A study done by Ernst & Young and ESPNW (2015) of 400 female executives internationally, found that 52 percent of C-Suite executives participated in university level sport, 94 percent played sport at one point in their lives and 74 percent agreed that a background in sport can help accelerate a woman's career. The study proposes that the top three leadership skills developed through sport are team-building skills, motivational skills and the

ability to complete projects (Ernst & Young & ESPNW, 2015). Additionally, respondents shared that the top three traits that people are perceived to have with a background in sport are a strong work ethic, teamwork and determination (Ernst & Young & ESPNW, 2015). Two reasons why this study is important is because it demonstrates the positive effect sport can have in increasing an individual's capacity to excel beyond their athletic career and positively contribute to society. Second, Women, like Disability, are a core area of inclusion for the NCAA. While one cannot expect an equally positive outcome if persons with a disability had the same opportunities to participate in collegiate level sport, there has yet to be an equitable opportunity for that population. However, considering the extensive research that exists supporting the positive effects of sport for an individual's development, one can assume that sporting opportunities would benefit persons with a disability and their future employment prospects.

Education and Employment-Population Ratio Statistics

The benefit of sport for an individual's development and the presumed benefit for employment prospects is important to address because of the education and employment statistics for the persons with a disability population in the United States. In 2013 in the United States, 41.4 percent and 66.8 percent of persons with and with no disability respectively, over the age of 25, had a post-secondary education (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Additionally, in 2019 in the United States, the employment-population ratio for persons with and with no disability for the ages of 16 to 64 was 30.9 percent and 74.6 percent respectively (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). The potential benefit that sport opportunities can have for persons with a disability in accessing education and increasing their employment-population ratio makes this research worthy of pursuit.

Literature Review Overview

In examining the plausibility of adaptive sports being sanctioned by the NCAA, three major themes need to be explored in existing literature: the legal background shaping adaptive sports in the United States, the NCAA as a governing organization and female athletics in the NCAA. The NCAA as a governing organization has extensive reach, is convoluted in structure and a private entity. These three factors, among others, give rise to questions regarding its legitimacy and accountability as a governing organization because there must be checks and balances to organizations that have such monolithic control. Especially when such organizations have historically been institutions of inequity by means of gender and disability discrimination.

However, the arguments for change and lessons learned from female activism and the use of Title IX has carved a pathway for similar changes to take place for student athletes with physical disabilities in US colleges. This literature will review the legal literature that forms the base for the current work, examine the legitimacy and accountability of the NCAA, discuss female inclusion in the NCAA and explore the current status of collegiate adaptive sports in the United States.

Legal Background

There are many legal factors that affect this research topic. This section will introduce and discuss the impact that Title IX, the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Dear Colleague Letter: Students with Disabilities in Extracurricular Athletics has had on shaping the adaptive sport landscape in the United States. Another important law that must be mentioned, but will not be expanded upon in this background, is Public Law 94-142, passed in 1975, which guaranteed appropriate public education to children with a disability in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Title IX

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a federal law in the United States that prohibits discrimination based on sex in any federally funded education program or activity (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015). Its origins are rooted in the government's intention to redress historical discrimination and promote equality of opportunity (Heckman, 1992). It is important to note that almost all private colleges and universities are subject to Title IX because their students receive financial aid from federal programs (NCAA, 2020c).

“The principal objective of Title IX is to avoid the use of federal money to support sex discrimination in education programs and to provide individual citizens effective protection against those practices. Title IX applies, with a few specific exceptions, to all aspects of federally funded education programs or activities. In addition to traditional educational institutions such as colleges, universities, and elementary and secondary schools, Title IX also applies to any education or training program operated by a recipient of federal financial assistance” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015).

Despite the verbiage of the law not stating athletics directly, the application of Title IX to education and athletic associations in the United States does apply (Brake, 2001; Messner, 2016; Koch, 1975). The application of Title IX in the sphere of athletics has had arguably the greatest impact on the operation of athletics in the United States than any other federal statute (Anderson

& Osborne, 2008). From a numerical perspective alone, from 1972 to 2007, there were 190 court cases dealing with Title IX and athletics, 109 of which specifically dealing with the collegiate level (Anderson & Osborne, 2008). While the number of court cases does not have causal relationship with the far-reaching policy changes that are visible today, it does provide some perspective as to the impact of Title IX in athletics.

One of the more publicized tests arising from Title IX in its application to athletics was the three-part effective accommodation test (Anderson & Osborne, 2008). The three-part effective accommodation test is used to determine an institution's compliance with Title IX in meeting the interests and abilities of male and female students (Anderson & Osborne, 2008). In summary, Title IX applied to federally funded universities with athletic programs (1) requires proportionality between the level of participation opportunities for male and female students and their respective enrollments, (2) or to demonstrate a history and practice of expanding opportunities for female athletes (or the underrepresented gender), (3) or to demonstrate that they have fully and effectively met the interests or abilities of female athletes (or the underrepresented gender) (Anderson & Osborne, 2008; Fay, 2011). The intent of the application of Title IX to athletic programs in US elementary, high schools and colleges was to correct the inequities endured by females based on opportunities to participate, access financial assistance and receive equal treatment and benefits (Fay, 2011). Title IX and its impact on female athletics in the NCAA will be expanded upon further in the section, "Female Athletics in the NCAA".

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehab Act): Section 504

The Rehabilitation Act (Rehab Act) of 1973 is a federal law in the United States that prohibits discrimination based on disability (U.S. Department of Labor, 2020). Section 504 of the Rehab Act states that,

“No otherwise qualified individual with a disability shall, solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance” (Sullivan, Lantz & Zirkel, 2000).

The operative words in the preceding statement is, “otherwise qualified”. This term has been highly contentious in litigation cases regarding the use of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The most often cited working definition of “otherwise qualified” is that accommodations can be made within reason (Sullivan et al., 2000). Regarding athletics, the United States

Department of Education stated that qualified handicapped athletes are to be provided with equal opportunities to participate in high school and collegiate athletics (Comerford, 2018; Fay, 2011).

“To make a case founded on Section 504, an athlete must establish: (1) they are disabled (i.e. the athlete must have a mental or physical impairment, or a record of or be regarded as having such an impairment that substantially limits a major life activity), (2) they are “otherwise qualified”, (3) that the defendant excluded the plaintiff from participation solely because of their disability and (4) that the defendant receives federal funding” (Sullivan et al., 2000).

Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 is federal civil rights legislation that,

“prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to participate in the mainstream of American life, to enjoy employment opportunities, to purchase goods and services, and to participate in State and local government programs and services. Modeled after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the ADA is an equal opportunity law for people with disabilities” (U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2020).

The ADA has five titles that deal with different areas of the public domain. Title II and III directly apply to athletics. Title II of the ADA states that,

“No qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by such entity” (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990).

Furthermore, to place a claim under Title II of the ADA, the plaintiff must prove that, “(1) They were injured by a public entity, (2) they were a qualified individual with a disability, (3) they were excluded from participating in or benefiting from the activities of the public entity and (4) such exclusion was by reason of their disability” (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990).

Courts have found, including at the Supreme Court level, that Title II applies to public institutions (e.g. high schools, colleges and universities) as well as high school athletic associations (Mitten et al., 2013). However, the NCAA has been determined to be a private entity by the Supreme Court and therefore Title II is not applicable to the NCAA (Cook, 1999).

Title III of the ADA states that,

“No individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of any place of public accommodation by any person who owns, leases (or leases to), or operates a place of public accommodation,” (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990).

Furthermore, to place a claim under Title III of the ADA, the plaintiff must prove that,

“They were discriminated against on the basis of disability, in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages or accommodations of any place of public accommodation and by any person who owns, leases, leases to, or operates a public accommodation” (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990).

Courts have found that Title III applies to the NCAA and this will be expanded upon further in the “Cases” subsection (Mitten et al., 2013).

The definition of disability is a cornerstone of successfully using the ADA in a litigation claim, a litigant must prove they have a disability within the context of the ADA (Edmonds, 2002). The ADA has a three-part definition for disability, “(1) A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual; (2) a record of such an impairment, and (3) being regarded as having such impairment” (Edmonds, 2002). There are two key terms that are vital in the Rehab Act and ADA, “major life activity” and “substantially limits”, these terms are defined below and will be expanded upon in the subsection of “Legal Discussion”.

Major Life Activity and Substantially Limits

Both of these terms are necessary to define as they appear in the Rehab Act and the ADA. As will be discussed in a later section, their interpretation can be controversial. The term “major life activity” appears in the language of the Rehab Act and ADA in defining disability: “A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the *major life activities* of such individual” (Edmonds, 2002; Comerford, 2018; Fay, 2011; Sullivan et al., 2000).

“Substantially limits” is used as an operative word in defining disability in the Rehab Act and ADA in conjunction with major life activity. “Substantially limits” is defined by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as being unable to perform a major life activity or significantly restricted as to the condition, manner or duration under which the average person can perform the major life activity (Fay, 2011; Edmonds, 2002)

Dear Colleague Letter: Students with Disabilities in Extracurricular Athletics (January 25, 2013)

In 2013 the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) released a Dear Colleague Letter clarifying the obligations of school districts to provide students with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in extracurricular athletics (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). This “Dear Colleague” letter was issued in response to the persisting lack of opportunities for students with physical disabilities to participate in their schools’ extra curricular activities (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). The most controversial statement arising from the letter was that if the interests and abilities of students with disabilities were not being fully and effectively met by the school district’s existing opportunities, the school district should create additional opportunities for those students with disabilities (Comerford, 2018). However, the OCR followed up by clarifying that school districts did not have to create separate or different extra-curriculars just for students with disabilities (Comerford, 2018). Despite the confusion around the language, the letter initiated discussion drawing comparisons to Title IX’s three-part effective accommodation test and its applications for creating opportunities for females (Comerford, 2018).

It is important to note that this Dear Colleague Letter provided interpretations and suggestions for creating adaptive sport opportunities that ultimately laid the groundwork for initiatives in the present day. There are two important statements that shape the interpretations and suggestions in the letter, the first being:

“A school district that offers extracurricular athletics must do so in such manner as is necessary to afford qualified students with disabilities an equal opportunity for participation. This means making reasonable modifications and providing those aids and services that are necessary to ensure an equal opportunity to participate, unless the school district can show that doing so would be a fundamental alteration to its program” (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

The second is,

“Students with disabilities who cannot participate in the school district’s existing extracurricular athletics program – even with reasonable modifications or aids and services – should still have an equal opportunity to receive the benefits of extracurricular athletics. When the interests and abilities of some students with disabilities cannot be as fully and effectively met by the school district’s existing extracurricular athletic program, the school district should create additional opportunities for those students with disabilities” (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

These two statements and examples provided in the letter suggested several ways in which students with physical disabilities could be accommodated. One such way is the adaptation of rules to accommodate those with a disability in a way that does not fundamentally alter the nature of the sport or provide an unfair advantage (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Another alternative, in the case that students could not be integrated into existing opportunities, is the offering of opportunities separate or different from existing opportunities (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). It is important to note that the intention of this suggestion is for schools and districts to create inclusive sport opportunities, so that everyone can participate together. In cases of creating new opportunities, to get enough participants, schools could collaborate on programming, able-bodied students could participate, and genders could be mixed (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The Dear Colleague Letter led to an increase in initiatives to create participation opportunities that were inclusive for all in elementary, high school and college. For example, the Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference (ECAC) established an “Inclusive Sport Initiative” and created the “Four Principles of Sport Inclusion” based off of the recommendations in the Dear Colleague Letter (Ackerman & Fay, 2016). This concluding point will be expanded upon further in the “Adaptive Sports and the NCAA” section.

Cases

The cases presented in this sub-section are organized and summarized to fit three major categories based on their relevance to this study, the NCAA and ADA Title III, Major Life Activity and Cases in Adaptive Sport.

NCAA and ADA Title III. To demonstrate the application of Title III to the NCAA three cases are presented below and their major findings.

Martin v. PGA Tour. In this case, Martin sued the PGA Tour under the ADA to accommodate his disability by allowing him to use a golf cart in competition. The PGA Tour argued that its competitions cannot be considered public because they are reserved for the best golfers (Anderson, 2002). However, the court found no reason for which performance of athletes becomes so elite that its governance is beyond public accommodation (Anderson, 2001). The Supreme Court held the Ninth Circuit’s decision that the use of a golf cart permits access to competition that the individual would not otherwise be able to engage in because of disability (Anderson, 2001). The Court found that the events the PGA Tour holds occur on golf courses and are places of public accommodation and that the PGA Tour leases and operates golf courses

for its events (Anderson, 2001). Furthermore, PGA events offer two potential benefits or services, watching the golf event or competing in it (Anderson, 2001). The PGA Tour attempted to argue that providing such an individualized assessment of Martin's case would place undue burden on them in the future as it would create precedent for more people to request individualized accommodations (Anderson, 2001). However, the Court countered that there are much more critical entities such as doctors and lawyers who must make these individualized assessments on a daily basis and arguably their decisions have much greater burden and societal impact than golf does (Anderson, 2001). In summary, the Court ruled in favor of Martin and two major advancements were made; that athletic operators could be subject to Title III of the ADA and that individualized assessment is an essential part of a claim made under the ADA (Anderson, 2001). Apart from legal considerations, *Martin v. PGA Tour* shows how simple rule adaptations can create opportunity for persons with a disability.

Bowers v. NCAA. In this case, Bowers sued the NCAA under the ADA because of academic eligibility issues that resulted in discrimination based on his learning disability. With partial credit to the Martin case, the case of *Bowers v. NCAA* resulted in adequate allegations that the NCAA operates a place of public accommodation (Bowers v. National Collegiate Athletic Association, 1998). It was found that, "A student's initial eligibility status, which is assigned according to strict criteria promulgated by the NCAA, determined whether and how much financial aid a student athlete could receive, and whether and to what extent a student athlete could practice, train, dine, live, and compete with a particular team" (Bowers v. NCAA, 1998). As a result, these assertions demonstrate that the NCAA operates and manages the discriminatory conditions of places of public accommodation (Bowers v. NCAA, 1998). However, this was a District Court case in New Jersey, so until a similar ruling is made at the Supreme Court level, the case could still be challenged. Regardless, it is important to take away that this case brings to light the inequitable access that can exist to social and educational experiences through sport opportunities.

Matthews v NCAA. In this case, Matthews sued the NCAA under the ADA because of academic eligibility issues that resulted in discrimination based on his learning disability. The court found that the NCAA regulated the conditions of participating in sanctioned athletic activities by determining eligibility criteria, a school's usage of athletic facilities, funding allocation, coach-athlete interactions and other activities (Matthews v. NCAA, 2001). Similar to

the Martin case, the court found that member institutions of the NCAA constructed athletic facilities primarily for NCAA competition and the NCAA in turn governed those competitions (Matthews v. NCAA, 2001). As a result, the NCAA exerts significant control over athletic programs based at member institution facilities and therefore Title III of the ADA does apply to the NCAA (Matthews v. NCAA, 2001).

Major Life Activity. There are several cases that provide insight into court rulings that hinge upon the working definition of major life activity.

Knapp v. Northwestern University. In this case, Knapp argued that playing college basketball was part of the major life activity of learning. It was determined that if a particular activity is a major life activity for an individual, its deprivation would be a substantial limitation for that individual (Knapp v. Northwestern University, 1996). For Knapp, because it was determined that his disability did not prevent him from participating in the activity of learning, it therefore didn't qualify as a disability that substantially limited a major life activity under the Rehab Act (Knapp v. Northwestern University, 1996).

Webb-Eaton v. Wayne County Community College. This is not an athletics case, however, it is important to include because it introduces a concept of relative limitation compared to the general population. In this case, Webb-Eaton argued that the nursing program she attended would not accommodate her severe allergy which substantially limited the major life activity of learning. The court found that, "An impairment is a disability within the meaning of [the ADA] if it substantially limits the ability of an individual to perform a major life activity as compared to most people in the general population" (Webb-Eaton v. Wayne County Community College District, 2013). Furthermore, that an impairment does not necessarily have to be significantly restricting in the performance of a major life activity to be considered substantially limiting (Webb-Eaton v. Wayne County Community College District, 2013). However, just as the Knapp case, the court determined that being a nurse in particular was not considered a major life activity as Webb-Eaton could pursue academics in other fields to continue the activity of learning (Webb-Eaton v. Wayne County Community College District, 2013).

Pahulu v. University of Kansas and Sandison v. Michigan High School Athletic Association. The Pahulu and Sandison cases have been grouped together because they both had court rulings that were in favor of the plaintiff on the point regarding what constitutes a major

life activity. The Pahulu case is one of the first where discussions are raised as to whether athletics falls under the major life activity of working, learning or as a major life activity itself (Pahulu v. University of Kansas, 1995). In the case of learning, courts have valued the social experience that higher education offers and the intangible benefits of participating in athletic programs to facilitate integration in the community and social engagement (Pahulu v. University of Kansas, 1995). Similarly, in the Sandison case, the court found that interscholastic sports (high school) is a major life activity because of their importance in the plaintiff's learning (Sandison v. Michigan High School Athletic Association, 1995). Speaking to those points, Pahulu stated that through football, "he has learned to be a team player; he has learned discipline; he has met people and been inspired to want a better life for himself; he has learned to care about his appearance; and his grades improved" (Pahulu v. University of Kansas, 1995). Additionally, the plaintiff brought forward the argument that playing college football was a major life activity for him, not in general (Pahulu v. University of Kansas, 1995). Similarly, in the Sandison case, participating in interscholastic athletics resulted in the plaintiff achieving better grades and kept him engaged with teammates in healthy social relationships that supported his academics (Sandison v. Michigan High School Athletic Association, 1995). In the end the court found that for Pahulu, intercollegiate football could be a major life activity (Pahulu v. University of Kansas, 1995). However, the court ruled against Pahulu in the case because his scholarship was still being honored and was given access to all academic services he had access to before he was disqualified from the team (due to health implications) (Pahulu v. University of Kansas, 1995).

Cases in Adaptive Sport. Below are two cases that demonstrate the application of the Rehab Act and ADA directly to adaptive sports.

McFadden v. Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association and Badgett v. Alabama High School Athletic Association. These two cases are important because of how they dealt with integration of adaptive sports into traditional events and athletic associations. In both cases, McFadden and Badgett were given the opportunity to represent their schools in track and field in wheelchair racing events (Lakowski, 2009). However, both encountered the same issue, their participation was relegated to that of a "non-scoring exhibition", where their results did not count towards their team's totals, and therefore not recognized as competitive events (Lakowski, 2009). The response was the same in both cases, the policies and actions by the athletic

associations involved reinforced the stigma regarding adaptive sports and people with physical disabilities, that they were not valued the same as able-bodied athletes (Lakowski, 2009). In particular, Badgett cited concerns regarding her ability to receive scholarships and other opportunities because of how her events were being recognized by the athletic association (Lakowski, 2009). In McFadden's case the defendant's main claim was that recognizing the results of their participation would give her school a competitive advantage over others because there were not enough athletic representatives from other schools in their event (Lakowski, 2009). Further, the defendant presented the minimum percentage requirement that required forty percent representation from schools in the state for the event to be fair (Lakowski, 2009). In Badgett's case, the defendant argued that having her participate in a race by herself was in the safety interest of others if the race was mixed (Lakowski, 2009). Badgett brought forward ample evidence demonstrating her prior performances and ability to race with others and present no harm or risk to them (Lakowski, 2009). However, the court concluded that the athletic association was not required to provide such an individualized assessment, in stark contradiction to the Martin case (Lakowski, 2009).

Legal Discussion

Major Life Activity. The ADA does not clearly define what a major life activity is (Edmonds, 2002), which presents complications when trying to establish a successful ADA claim. The closest definition appears in Title I of the ADA that states a major life activity as functions such as caring for one self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working (Fay, 2011; Edmonds, 2002). However, this definition does not begin to cover the scope of activities that have been deemed as major life activities through litigation cases. Major life activities have been expanded to include basic activities that the average person in the general population can perform with little or no difficulty (Edmonds, 2002). In examining what qualifies as a major life activity, factors that are typically considered by the court are the importance of the activity in everyday life, the degree to which individuals perform the activity and whether most individuals in society perform the activity (Edmonds, 2002). Regarding athletics at the high school and college level, there have been mixed decisions depending on the kind of claim being made. While one plaintiff was not successful in claiming playing basketball as a major life activity of learning, in the Sandison case, the court found that participation on the cross country and track team was an important and integral part of their

education (Edmonds, 2002). Additionally, in the *Pahulu* case, the court did recognize that sport itself could be a major life activity (*Pahulu v. University of Kansas*, 1995). This introduces several important questions about the future of adaptive sport, mainly, should sport be considered a major life activity?

Importance of the Activity in Everyday Life. As discussed earlier, and supported by numerous studies, sport offers physical, social, emotional, psychological, developmental and societal benefits. From the *Pahulu v. University of Kansas* case, *Pahulu* commented that, “through football he has learned to be a team player; he has learned discipline; he has met people and been inspired to want a better life for himself” (*Pahulu v. University of Kansas*, 1995). Additionally, in the *Knapp v. Northwestern* case, it was determined that, “if a particular activity is a major life activity for an individual, its deprivation would be a substantial limitation for that individual” (*Knapp v. Northwestern*, 1996). Based on the history of court cases regarding “major life activity” interpretations, something that is deemed as “major” has a comparative general importance in an individual’s life (Eichhorn, 1998). So, if the activity in question has a comparative importance and significance in the individual’s life, then it could be regarded as a major life activity (Eichhorn, 1998). Therefore, when assessed on a case by case basis, as recommended by the Supreme Court in the *Martin* case, it is possible to argue that sport can have a significant importance in an individual’s life making it a major life activity.

The Degree to Which Individuals and Whether Most Individuals in Society Perform the Activity. The argument that not everyone can and is able to compete in Division 1 level sport is a valid argument and was used successfully in the *Knapp v. Northwestern* case (*Knapp v. Northwestern*, 1996). It is clear then that sport is not something that most people participate in because it is being defined as an activity that is highly competitive, organized and reserved for elite individuals. However, that is a very narrow definition of sport. Merriam-Webster (2020) defines sport as, “A source of diversion; recreation. Physical activity engaged in for pleasure”. Cambridge Dictionary (2020) defines sport as, “A game, competition, or activity needing physical effort and skill that is played or done according to rules, for enjoyment and/or as a job. All types of physical activity that people do to keep healthy or for enjoyment”. Oxford English Dictionary (2020) defines sport as, “Success, pleasure, or recreation derived from or afforded by an activity, originally and especially hunting, shooting or fishing. An activity providing diversion, entertainment or fun; a pastime”. Science Daily (2020) defines sport as, “all forms of

usually competitive physical activity which, through casual or organized participation, aim to use, maintain or improve physical ability while providing entertainment to participants, and in some cases, spectators”. The common words that these definitions use are recreation, enjoyment and physical activity. Based on these definitions provided, it can be argued that most individuals can and do perform the activity of sport.

Are NCAA Athletes Employees? An important item to address is the topic of whether NCAA athletes are considered employees. This is particularly important considering the recent changes to policy making NCAA athletes eligible to make money from their name, image and likeness (Booker, 2020; Baker, 2020). This is a topic worthy of exploration on its own given recent developments, but there is an important consideration as it pertains to adaptive sport, the ADA and the NCAA. If NCAA athletes are considered to be employees, it can potentially expose the NCAA to new legal considerations under the Rehab Act and the ADA. This is because it could be argued that by denying adaptive sport opportunities in the NCAA, an individual is substantially limited in the major life activity of working.

NCAA: Legitimacy and Accountability

The legitimacy of the NCAA as a governing organization of collegiate athletics in the United States must be discussed. As an organization with extensive reach and control in collegiate athletics, it plays a crucial role in constructing and maintaining sociocultural values in the United States. This section will define legitimacy, discuss the NCAA’s claims to legitimacy and the opportunities for such a large-scale organization to change.

Defining Legitimacy and its Source

There is extensive literature on legitimacy and can be broadly defined as,

“Credibility, acceptability, a degree of cultural support and a general perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions. Furthermore, it is the perception, belief or acceptability among those which the entity seeks to govern” (Black 2008; Suchman, 1995; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008).

As a result, legitimacy is largely a status conferred by social actors by means of congruence with their values and expectations (Deephouse, 1996). However, it is important to note the operative word in the definition for legitimacy provided, “some” (Deephouse, 1996). This concept of “some” means that a legitimate organization does not necessarily need to share the worldview of

general social values, but only be congruent with the worldview of the formal social circle it seeks to govern (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). Furthermore, the fact that only some socially constructed norms, values, beliefs and definitions are required to construct legitimacy implies exclusion of others. Here lies the issue, whose normative values are being subjugated in the process of legitimation?

Legitimacy is considered an objective evaluation yet is created subjectively (Suchman, 1995). As such, a perfectly legitimate organization is one that is not questioned, it exists in a state that is taken at “face value” or “taken for granted” (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). With that, questioning is likely to arise when an organization is not viewed as perfectly legitimate. This is possible because just as legitimacy is created subjectively, the value systems on which this legitimacy is based can change (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). Regardless of how well an organization has fulfilled its mission (which is a subjective appraisal in and of itself), if there is a value change in the population categorized as “some”, it yields fundamental challenges to the organization (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). It is then evident that legitimacy can be viewed as a degree to which an organization culturally aligns with the transient nature of social values and belief systems of the population it seeks to govern or serve (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008).

Forms of Legitimacy

Legitimacy can be deconstructed into three types: pragmatic, moral and cognitive. Legitimate organizations may exhibit one of, a combination of or all of these types.

Pragmatic. The perception that an organization or governing body will pursue the interests of those governed (Black, 2008). Legitimacy relies on the direct and indirect exchanges between the organization and audience but can also include broader social networks and groups (Suchman, 1995). People will base their judgement on an organization and its behaviour on the practical consequences (positive and negative) to them (Suchman, 1995).

Moral. The organization pursues goals that are perceived as morally appropriate by its members and those it governs (Black, 2008). This is a value judgement that can be summarized in the questions “Is this the right thing to do?” (Suchman, 1995). However, as noted earlier, the subjectivity lies in the “some” whose values are being enacted by the organization (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). Often the “rightness” being pursued by an organization is wrongly assumed to represent everyone’s version of what is right (Suchman, 1995). This further implies that an

organization that is not perfectly legitimate could be acting in ways that neglect what is morally appropriate as deemed by “some” subset of the population it governs.

Cognitive. The organization’s history, critical mass and governance is so deep rooted that it has become perceived as necessary (Black, 2008). Cognitive bases of legitimacy consist of comprehensibility and “taken for grantedness” (Suchman, 1995). Comprehensibility is the view that the organization acts in a way that is naturally perceived as a “correct” way of organizing activities (Suchman, 1995). “Taken for grantedness” is the persistence an organization has had over time and its embeddedness in society (Suchman, 1995).

Linking Pragmatic, Moral and Cognitive Legitimacy. Suchman proposes two linkages between the three types of legitimacy. First, legitimacy becomes more elusive to obtain and difficult to manipulate moving from pragmatic, to moral to cognitive forms. Second, legitimacy becomes more subtle, profound, and self sustaining moving from pragmatic, to moral to cognitive forms (Suchman, 1995). The literature suggests this is due to the normative foundations for pragmatic and moral legitimacy (Black, 2008; Suchman, 1995). The normative values people draw upon to make value judgements are transient in nature and are impacted by ever changing world views and societal norms (Black, 2008).

NCAA Size and Organizational Structure

The NCAA is a member-led organization that oversees college athletics in the United States. There are 1,113 colleges and universities that belong to the NCAA that span three divisions (DI, DII and DIII) and make up 102 total conferences. The constituent ranks of the NCAA include college presidents, athletic directors, faculty athletics representatives, compliance officers, conference staff, academic support staff, coaches, sports information directors and health and safety personnel. Member representatives serve on committees that propose rules and policies, decide what rules to adopt and implement the rules that govern the NCAA. There are over 150 committees in the NCAA that span affairs regarding each Division separately as well as a committee that represents all three divisions that address association wide issues. At the national office, there are over 500 employees that interpret and support NCAA legislation, run the championships and manage programs that benefit student athletes (NCAA, 2020a; NCAA, 2020b). To further emphasize the scale of the NCAA, for the year ended August 31, 2019, they had over 1.1 billion dollars in revenue, just under 80 percent of that (867 million dollars) was from television and marketing rights fees (Crowe LLP, 2019). The size of the NCAA, the

interdependent network and the financial scale at which it operates binds the NCAA to a complex web of accountability relationships that can at times conflict with each other and will be discussed further in the following sections.

Defining the NCAA's Claim to Legitimacy

As defined in Black's article "Constructing and Contesting Legitimacy and Accountability in Polycentric Regulatory Regimes", the NCAA is an example of a non-state polycentric regulatory regime (from here on referred to as a "polycentric regime" for brevity) (Black, 2008). What is meant by this is two things. First, the NCAA is a non-state governing organization in that it has no direct ties to state or federal government and is listed as a non-profit private organization (Black, 2008). Furthermore, it has not been proven that the NCAA receives any federal funding (directly or indirectly), which is important to note because as mentioned earlier, Title IX, the Rehab Act and the ADA all directly apply to entities that receive federal funding. Second, a polycentric regime is one that is "marked by fragmentation, complexity and interdependence between actors that act within the boundaries marked by the issues with which they are directly concerned with" (Black, 2008). Moreover, the NCAA as a polycentric regime draws attention to the multiple sites in which regulation occurs including the individual institutions, the conferences the divisions and as a national association (Black, 2008). Conceptually, as a polycentric regime the NCAA operates, as Black suggests, dialectically, meaning that as much as there is regulation coming from top-down there is up-regulation coming from the constituent groups (Black, 2008). The regulator and regulated are dependent on each other (Black, 2008). The fragmentation, complexity and interdependence of the NCAA are all highlighted in the previous section; this provides just a glimpse of the Hydra that is the NCAA.

As a governing organization, the NCAA must have a claim to legitimacy and a narrative through which its legitimacy is constructed. The basis of the NCAA's legitimacy is pragmatic, moral and cognitive (Black, 2008; Suchman, 1995; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008).

Pragmatically, the members of the NCAA, the student athletes which it governs and to external agents, there is a general perception that the NCAA will pursue the interests of those governed directly or indirectly (Black, 2008). The NCAA does this by propagating its priorities with regards to its student athletes as "academics, well-being and fairness" (NCAA, 2020a). Morally, the NCAA pursues goals that are perceived as morally appropriate by its members and those it governs (Black, 2008). For example, the NCAA advertises on its website that it is a champion of

inclusion and diversity. The fallacy of this moral claim by the NCAA is that they are the ones who are defining what diversity and inclusion means. Furthermore, they are dictating the diversity and inclusion initiatives that are implemented across the NCAA, implying that there could be a hierarchy of their moral pursuits and an exclusion of what “some” subset of the population deems is morally right. Furthermore, a difficulty that arises from this is that within the NCAA, different stakeholders will value goals differently. These multiple accountability relationships can conflict with each other and will be expanded upon in the next section. Cognitively, the NCAA’s history and critical mass of governance at a national scale is so deep rooted that it has become perceived as a necessary governing body of student athletics at the collegiate level (Black, 2008). These three pillars demonstrate that legitimacy lies as much in the values, interests and expectations of those who perceive or accept the regime as they do in the regime itself (Black, 2008). Therefore, a shift in beliefs, values and morals of those involved in the regime as members, or those being regulated, would lead to a contestation of the organization’s claim to legitimacy.

Challenges Associated with the NCAA’s Claims to Legitimacy

There are challenges and criticisms associated with the nature of a polycentric regime that give rise to contestations towards a regime’s claim to legitimacy. The three most prominent with relation to the NCAA are democratic, normative and multiple claims to legitimacy (Black, 2008).

Polycentric governing organizations, such as the NCAA, have issues of representation (Black, 2008). Despite having over 150 committees to deal with the governance across their multi-dimensional platform, the NCAA is convoluted with regards to decision making structures and to whom such committees should be accountable to. Furthermore, the nearly half-million student athletes are only represented by several student athlete representatives in each division. As a result, there is a structural deficiency in the NCAA’s organization as there is no democratic representation or input from those who are being governed, the student athletes (Black, 2008). Therefore, the NCAA’s regulations primarily affect the student athletes who neither participate democratically in the rule making process nor have an opportunity to elect representatives in critical committees (Black, 2008). Another layer of complexity to democratic representation in the NCAA is the equitable advocacy for those identified by the NCAA as falling within one of their five core areas of inclusion. Efforts have been made to support advancement in female sport

in recent years through positions like the Senior Woman Administrator and much more work must be done to continually create fair opportunities for women. However, it is noticeable that an equivalent position does not exist that actively advocates for disability. The difficulty lies in the extensive control the NCAA has as a dominant regulator of college athletics in the United States. There exists only a handful of competitors, like the NAIA (National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics), that are insignificant when compared to the scale of the NCAA. As such, both a college and an athlete wanting to partake in college sports will have little choice except to conform to rules devised by the NCAA (Weistart, 1983).

As a polycentric regime, the NCAA endures competing conceptions of the good that should be pursued as normative values are transient in nature (Black, 2008). The normative legitimacy of the NCAA undergoes constant questioning of whether the interests of the student athlete are adequately represented, especially considering its lack of democratic representation discussed prior (Weistart, 1983). For example, it was not until the passing of Title IX, a series of litigatory cases and the creation of the Emerging Sports for Women program that female athletic opportunities were being added to the NCAA (Messner, 2016; Brake, 2001). Ultimately, the regulations and policies of the NCAA have a great effect on the access to athletic competition and post-secondary education for individuals and social groups, such as females and athletes with physical disabilities (Weistart, 1983).

The third challenge that the NCAA faces is having comingled or multiple claims to legitimacy (Black, 2008). This is a result of the NCAA's athletic, academic and economic responsibilities. The reality is that while these responsibilities do intersect through compromise, there are accountability relationships in each branch that conflict with the normative legitimacy claims in others (Black, 2008). For example, sanctioning adaptive sports may be the morally correct action to take to provide equal opportunity for all student athletes, but economically it may not fit into the current budgetary agenda of the NCAA. It is important to note that budgetary constraints do not supersede laws but in the current circumstance the NCAA is not legally obligated to include adaptive sports. Thus, a conflict arises, and the NCAA must respond to one of the accountability relationships to propagate its legitimacy. However, this is not to discount the fact that the NCAA never acts in the best interest of the athlete as it must play the balancing role in each of its accountability relationships (Weistart, 1983). Nonetheless, a polycentric regime must engage in maintenance activity to mitigate the threats to their claims of legitimacy.

The NCAA's legitimacy lies "within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions", implying that it also excludes the views of certain populations (Black 2008; Suchman, 1995; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). The NCAA lacks democratic representation of its athletes in its governance who hold an essential set of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions. Normative values are transient in nature and not evolving with society neglects the changing needs of populations that the NCAA serves. With multiple claims to legitimacy, the NCAA has to make decisions that benefits one accountability relationship more than it does another. Ultimately, organizations (not just the NCAA specifically) cannot serve the best interests of everyone, however, it is those unserved people that will seek to disrupt the existing set of institutions to have their interests met (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Then it is up to the organization to respond in a way that will be of benefit or detriment to their longevity and legitimacy.

The NCAA's Maintenance and Repair Strategies for Legitimacy

Very few organizations have such perfect legitimacy and control that no ongoing maintenance is necessary (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Just as the NCAA actively cultivates legitimacy pragmatically, morally and cognitively, they must also engage in behaviours to maintain it and repair it in response to the democratic (pragmatic) and normative (moral) challenges (Black, 2008). To maintain legitimacy, the NCAA engages in three main strategies, conform, manipulate and inform, because even as a broad sweeping regime, there must be an active strategic process to reproduce legitimacy (Black, 2008; Nite, 2017). The NCAA conforms by portraying values that would most likely generate support in United States culture; athletic excellence, academic success and being progressive (Nite, 2017). Progressiveness of the NCAA is further defined as being an organization that is perceived to lead and value diversity; racial, gender and sexual (Nite, 2017). The NCAA manipulates and informs through a distinct process of delegitimizing the threat, defending the legitimacy of the NCAA and re-institutionalizing the NCAA as a legitimate organization (Nite, 2017). A common way the NCAA discredits challenges to its legitimacy, or delegitimizes the opposition, is by highlighting the financial strains that would impact lower-profile universities by adopting new sweeping policies and therefore undermine the fairness of the association (Nite, 2017). For example, not all universities have the financial capacity to add adaptive sports without having to make cuts in other places. It is important to note that this similar argument was used by the NCAA when Title IX came into

effect and it failed because budgetary constraints do not trump government laws. The NCAA then defends its legitimacy by justifying the logic supporting its regulation (Nite, 2017). While the NCAA may not be able to make sweeping policy change, it does have an office of inclusion that oversees issues regarding, gender, sexual orientation, race and disability equity (NCAA, 2020d). Whether the office of inclusion has an impactful output or not is a different discussion, but it does satisfy the public image of the NCAA as taking measures to defend its legitimacy as an organization that values inclusion. Lastly, the NCAA re-institutionalizes its legitimacy by reaffirming its values as an organization that is progressive and supportive of its student athletes (Nite, 2017). This starts to bring to light how the NCAA must strategically address threats to its legitimacy by responding to changes of social and cultural values of those it seeks to govern. However, its size and scope make it conservative and slow to change.

Analysis of the NCAA's Legitimacy and Opportunities for Change

The NCAA's claims to legitimacy, pragmatically, morally and cognitively, and its maintenance strategies begin to illuminate structural weaknesses that yield potential for critical change, such as the inclusion of adaptive sports in the NCAA. Two identifiable areas are bottom-up change and legal action. As a polycentric regime, the NCAA's legitimacy is founded upon its fragmented network. To review, these are individual institutions, conferences, divisions and the 150 committees that make up the NCAA. If there is a critical social shift at any of these levels, there is a vast institutional impact that could occur. Therefore, while taking on the NCAA as an entity may not yield change because of its mechanisms of maintenance, targeting individual institutions and conferences could generate a positive momentum for greater change across the organization by establishing multiple points of pressure. As Black states,

“The interdependencies that are created through enrollment and interconnectedness can come at a price, as the regulator [the NCAA] has to adjust its structures or strategies to meet the legitimacy claims of others in the network in ways it would not otherwise want to do” (Black, 2008).

Due to the high dependency and interconnectedness of the NCAA, alterations to the normative foundations of legitimacy at lower levels are likely to have a greater impact on the regulatory body as a whole as internal threats are among the most impactful a polycentric regime will face (Black, 2008; Weistart, 1983). Therefore, if a conference were to adopt greater inclusion of adaptive sports in its function, the shift of normative claims to legitimacy should not

only lead to greater pressure on other conferences to do so as well, but contest the normative claims of the NCAA as a national association. The goal of actions like these, that drive bottom-up change, is to gradually undermine the existing legitimacy structure rather than directly attack the institution (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). The other route for critical change is the pursuit of legal action. Historically, precedent has been set that the NCAA is responsive to court rulings that legally mandate change in governance (Nite, 2017). This is evident in the application of Title IX and the inclusion of female athletics at the NCAA level, which will be expanded upon in the next section.

Female Athletics in the NCAA

There are lessons to be learned from the female experience in sport that can be related to the narrative of adaptive sport. This section will discuss the social and cultural barriers that impacted female participation in sport, the effect of Title IX on female collegiate sports and the different initiatives that the NCAA took to support female sport opportunities.

Cultural Barriers to Female Sport Participation

Before examining the effects of Title IX on the inclusion of females in athletics in the NCAA it is important to explore the sociological context of the situation. Historically, sport has been an institution that reproduces idealized masculinity (Messner, 2016). Throughout the 20th century in the United States, changes in the structure of society that yielded greater presence of women in the workplace in combination with new waves of feminism contested the hyper-masculine culture in multiple facets of every day life (Messner, 2016). In response to the diminishing inequalities between sexes in arenas of public life, sport as a vehicle to represent the male gender as strong, powerful and dominant became increasingly important (Messner, 2016). As a result, the notion of being an athlete became firmly associated with gendered traits, in that males embodied what an athlete was; aggressive, strong and competitive (Messner, 2016). This created an extreme social and cultural barrier for entry to sports for females, because to be a female athlete was an oxymoron. One could not have feminine traits and also participate in a masculine domain (Messner, 2016; Brake, 2001).

Therefore, the equality issues that females endured in the domain of athletics were not necessarily of formal equality but rather subordination and structuralism (Brake, 2001). Formal equality applies the same rules to everyone in society, treating everyone equally. However, it neglects the nuances of reality and society and result in inequity (Brake, 2001). Using a disability

example, having an office on the second floor of a building with no elevator treats all the employees the same, but creates inequity for those with mobility impairments. This situation gives rise to questions like: what statement is being made by the company and would any employees with mobility impairments consider working there? Furthermore, what if an entire industry was set up in such a way, or institutions like schools were inaccessible for people with physical disabilities? The institution is treating everyone the same but creates evident issues in equity of access to fundamental rights like education. The subordination paradigm credits inequality to the hegemonic dominance of one set of beliefs and values over another as the cause (Brake, 2001). This view reflects the nuances that exist in society and seeks to rectify inequity through policies that create equitable opportunities (Brake, 2001). Lastly, structuralism views difference not as inherent, but constructed through social relationships and institutional practices (Brake, 2001). Taken all together, women face constraints on their agency because the dominant paradigm of sport as an institution in the United States has been historically hyper-masculinized and arguably constructed to exclude female participation (Messner, 2016; Brake, 2001). Based on examples provided, the same concepts that shape the constraints for female participation in sport can be applied to adaptive sport as well. The social and cultural context of sport as a contested domain builds the preface for Title IX application to the NCAA to include female athletics.

Title IX and the Inclusion of Female Athletics in the NCAA

As presented in the legal background section, Title IX came into effect in 1972 as a federal law in the United States to prohibit discrimination based on sex in any federally funded education program or activity (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015). However, it was not until 1975 that the Department of Health, Education and Welfare had approval to implement regulations that have the pervasive effect that exists today in educational institutions in the United States receiving Federal financial assistance (Koch, 1975). What makes the regulations of Title IX so bold is that its application extends to all programs and activities that indirectly benefit from an entity that receives Federal financial assistance (Koch, 1975). As a result, Title IX regulations effectively became applicable to collegiate sports (Koch, 1975).

It is important to note that Title IX applies to collegiate athletic programs if the college directly or indirectly receives federal funding (*Grove City College v. Bell*, 1984). However, case law thus far holds that Title IX does not apply to the NCAA because it has not been proven that

it directly or indirectly receives federal funds (Comerford, 2018; National Collegiate Athletic Association v. Smith, 1999). In the case of *NCAA v. Smith*, it was argued that because the NCAA receives membership dues from members that receive federal funding, it makes the NCAA an indirect recipient of federal funds (NCAA v. Smith, 1999). In the judge's decision the receipt of dues was not sufficient to trigger Title IX coverage because entities that only benefit economically from federal assistance are not subject to Title IX (NCAA v. Smith, 1999). Ultimately the court ruling held that Title IX does not apply to the NCAA, but it did not outright determine that the NCAA does not receive federal funds (NCAA v. Smith, 1999; Comerford, 2018). This is because two arguments from the case were left unanswered. First, whether the NCAA directly or indirectly receives federal financial assistance through the National Youth Sports Program (NCAA v. Smith, 1999). Second, Smith argued that, "when a recipient cedes controlling authority over a federally funded program to another entity, the controlling entity is covered by Title IX regardless whether it is itself a recipient" (NCAA v. Smith, 1999). What further complicates matters is that at the high school level, there have been mixed decisions as to whether Title IX applies high school athletic associations (Comerford, 2018). As a result, the question remains, does the NCAA received federal funds? The important implication if the NCAA does receive federal funds, for the NCAA and adaptive sport, is that it would be subject to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Title IX created a pathway for the fight in equity for female sports at the collegiate level. Especially due to the three-part effective accommodation test. However, the fallacy that was expressed when females began exerting greater pressure for athletic opportunities on academic institutions in the United States was that equality was being satisfied based on female interest (Brake, 2001). While this interpretation of Title IX in response to pressure from females was correct on the grounds of formal equality, several court rulings changed the landscape of how Title IX was interpreted (Brake, 2001). In a case involving Brown University, Brown eliminated funding for its varsity women's gymnastics and volleyball teams as part of a budget cutting plan (Brake, 2001). Brown claimed that it was still in compliance with Title IX because it was treating men and women equally based on expressed interest in athletics relative to their student population (Brake, 2001). However, the court ruled against Brown stating that, "Interest and ability rarely develop in a vacuum; they evolve as a function of opportunity and experience" (Brake, 2001). This landmark ruling by the court did two things. First, it recognized the

institutional role that systematically, culturally and socially constructed the interests of men and women in athletics and that the institution was in part responsible for the reproduction of inequality (Brake, 2001). This can be directly related to the experience of athletes with a physical disability. Similar to the experience of females, people with physical disabilities were and continue to be part of a system that systematically, culturally and socially shapes their interest and ability. If the opportunity does not exist for persons with a physical disability to participate, how can the interest or ability ever develop? Second, it set precedent for a lengthy list of future cases that were founded upon the theories of equality based on subordination and structuralism (Messner, 2016; Brake, 2001). Both these points are important in the developing threat to the NCAA's claim to legitimacy. First, it marked a shift in normative values that were incongruent with NCAA's existing normative claims. Second, the string of cases that ensued targeted the interdependent institutions, conferences and divisions creating a threat to the NCAA's legitimacy by nature of its dependency on this interdependent network. As a result, the NCAA had to adjust its governing policy to embrace female inclusion in sport to maintain its claim to legitimacy. It is important to note that although the use of Title IX achieved greater opportunities for females in sport, there is still a discrepancy when it comes to the objective and subjective valuation of female athletics (Brake, 2001). Furthermore, the unique narrative that is embodied in female sport is one that is still being pushed for, as their lived experience is distinct from the male narrative but not less in value (Brake, 2001).

Initiatives Supporting Female Sports in the NCAA

There have been a number of initiatives from the NCAA to support the growth of female athletics in the NCAA and at member institutions. This section will highlight two that can potentially be used for adaptive sport as well.

Emerging Sport Status. In 1993, the NCAA created the Gender Equity Task Force and the following year adopted its recommendation for the Emerging Sports for Women program (NCAA, 2020e). The Emerging Sports for Women program is intended to help create more athletic opportunities for women, sport-sponsorship options for institutions and help targeted sports achieve NCAA championship status (NCAA, 2020e). The program has had success in increasing opportunities for female participation and transitioning sports to championship status.

To be considered for emerging sport status, the sport must fulfill several requirements (NCAA, 2020f). The sport must demonstrate that at least 20 institutions sponsor the sport at a

varsity or club level. The sport is considered to be sponsored if it has or will engage in at least five intercollegiate contests against other colleges. The application also requires 10 letters of commitment from 10 NCAA institutions, signed by their school's chancellor, athletic director and senior woman administrator, that either sponsor the sport or intend to. Other considerations in the application include health and safety, growth potential, economic viability, NCAA governance and legislation and other applicant sports pursuing membership (NCAA, 2020f). Once accepted as an emerging sport, the sport must gain, or demonstrate steady progress towards, championship status within ten years (NCAA, 2020e). To attain championship status, a sport, individual or team, must be sponsored by 40 varsity NCAA programs or 28 programs if its at the Division 3 level (NCAA, 2020e).

The Emerging Sports for Women program has been successful in fostering the creation of opportunities for female participation in sport. The results from a longitudinal study on the impact of the Emerging Sports Program show that in the timespan examined, there was a significant increase in the number of participation opportunities for women (McCollum, 2017). Division 1 and 3 saw the largest move towards compliance. It is hypothesized that the effect on Division 1 schools occurred because of the higher level of visibility and scrutiny that comes with being a Division 1 institution (McCollum, 2017). It was hypothesized that Division 3 schools saw a large move towards compliance because they do not have to allocate money towards scholarships and can theoretically apply incoming funds to creating participatory opportunities (McCollum, 2017). Since the start of the program, beach volleyball, rowing, ice hockey, water polo and bowling have all successfully become NCAA championship sports (NCAA, 2020e). Sports that are currently on the list are equestrian, rugby and triathlon and this August, acrobatics and tumbling and women's wrestling will be added as emerging sports (NCAA, 2020f; NCAA, 2020g).

Another sport looking to make the list is STUNT and it is important to mention because of the advertising that they have done to support their advancement as a sport. It has recently received recommendation to be added as an emerging sport because of its growing sponsorship and is relatively inexpensive (NCAA, 2020g). One of the selling points for STUNT is its capacity to assist schools with their Title IX compliance. Unlike cheerleading, STUNT can be used to meet Title IX requirements such as proportionality of opportunities based on female enrollment. Another feature is that the sport is easy to follow and understand, so its easy to gain

traction with fan support. Third, its relatively simplistic logistically and cost effective to run. The season for STUNT runs during the Spring which tends to be an off-peak time for other sports and it uses existing facilities for training and events. Lastly, STUNT advertises its rapid growing popularity and large recruiting base as one of its key advantages because of the opportunity for large-scale growth (USA Cheer, 2019).

Senior Woman Administrator. In 1989 the NCAA created the Senior Woman Administrator (SWA) designation for the highest-ranking female in each NCAA athletics department or conference office. The purpose of the SWA is to promote meaningful representation of women in leadership and have a “seat at the table” in management decisions to ensure they are made equitably (NCAA, 2020h; NCAA Resources, 2019). The SWA does such things as serve on NCAA committees, participate in eligibility hearings and are involved in higher level decisions that involve their campuses and conferences. It is important to distinguish that the SWA is a designation and not a position, the SWA is not an NCAA requirement and the SWA is meant to oversee all sports, men’s, women’s, revenue generating and non-revenue generating. The NCAA advertises that optimizing the SWA designation can lead to several positive outcomes. First, improved decision making as a result of inclusion of diverse perspectives. Second, leadership representation that reflects the student athlete demographic. Third, visible presence of females in leadership positions. As much as the SWA position has made a positive contribution to the advancement of female athletics, there is still much work to be done as highlighted by their report on key findings from 2017 (NCAA, 2017a). Of the SWAs interviewed, only 46 percent were involved in major financial decisions in their athletics department. There is also still progress to be made in representation as 20 percent of athletic directors, 40 percent of head coaches and 35 percent of committee members in the NCAA are women. The NCAA advises there are opportunities to optimize the SWA designation, such as clarifying and communicating the purpose of the designation, measure the experiences of SWAs, address the low representation of ethnic minority women, address divisional differences and offer professional development programming (NCAA, 2017b).

Adaptive Sports and the NCAA

This section will discuss the current landscape of adaptive sport, the sociocultural barriers for adaptive sport, current work in the field of adaptive sport, a framework through which change factors for adaptive sport can be evaluated and lessons that can be learned from female athletics and the recent growth of Esports at the collegiate level.

Current Adaptive Sport Programming Landscape

Currently there are 21 adaptive sport programs in United States colleges that vary in their sport offerings and competition level (refer to Appendix C) (AbleThrive, 2016). Recreationally, there are offerings that include powerchair hockey, boccia, golf and much more (AbleThrive, 2016). Competitively, sports include wheelchair basketball, wheelchair tennis and wheelchair track.

Wheelchair Basketball. Collegiate level wheelchair basketball started back in the 1940s by the University of Illinois, a University often looked upon as a pioneer in adaptive sport programming (Disability Resources & Educational Services: College of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2020). Other historically established and successful programs include the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater (est. 1973), University of Texas Arlington (est. 1976) and more (University of Wisconsin Whitewater: Recreation Sports & Facilities, 2020; University of Texas Arlington: Movin' Mavs, 2020). Currently, there are 13 Universities that offer intercollegiate wheelchair basketball programs in the National Wheelchair Basketball Association's Intercollegiate Division. There are 18 programs when men's and women's teams are counted separately. Some schools, like the University of Alabama, field both Men's and Women's teams. Some programs, like the University of Edinboro, field coed teams (their rosters include both men and women). A unique addition to the intercollegiate division is the City University of New York (CUNY) team. An initiative fronted by Ryan Martin, coach for the CUNY team and Advisor for Inclusive Sports at the CUNY Athletic Conference, the CUNY team will field players from a collection of universities in the conference (National Wheelchair Basketball Association, 2020a; CUNY Athletic Conference, 2020).

The Classification System and Coed Competition. Wheelchair basketball uses a classification system for competition. Players are assigned a classification, or "point", ranging from 1 to 4.5, with increments of 0.5, based on their functional ability and other factors (higher points represent greater functional ability). At any given time in the intercollegiate wheelchair

basketball division, a team is allowed to field a line-up on the court with a maximum of 15 points (NWBA, 2020b). An example five-person line-up would have players of 1, 2.5, 3, 4 and 4.5 points respectively. In a game where a team has women and men (coed), women play with a one-point reduction. For example, a female that is typically a classification of 3.5 would play as a 2.5 in coed competition, however no classification will drop below 1. The point reduction rule is currently used in the National Wheelchair Basketball Association and in professional leagues in Europe (NWBA, 2019). An additional rule that is sometimes used in coed competition, for example at the domestic level in Canada, is that at least two females must be on the court at all times.

Able-Body Inclusion. Able-body athlete inclusion has been recognized as a potential growth opportunity for wheelchair basketball, and other adaptive sports, internationally. This is possible because of the classification system where able-bodied athletes are assigned a 4.5 classification and play in a sport chair just as all the other athletes. Wheelchair Basketball Canada allows able-bodied athletes to compete at the domestic level in their Canadian Wheelchair Basketball League and at the Canada Games (a national multi-sport event). They see it as an opportunity for siblings and friends to play a sport together, to develop athletes that will go on to represent Canada at an international level and to drive participation numbers across the country (Wheelchair Basketball Canada, 2020a; Wheelchair Basketball Canada, 2020b; Wheelchair Basketball Canada, 2019). Germany and other countries have also recognized the advantages associated with able-bodied inclusion over recent years (IWBF, 2016).

Wheelchair Tennis. Collegiate wheelchair tennis had one of its biggest championships in 2019. Athletes from eight schools participated in the event, including Michigan State, San Diego State, University of Central Florida, University of Alabama and more (Maher, 2019). The tournament resulted in the University of Alabama claiming their fifth championship title but also foreshadowed the growth and potential of wheelchair tennis at the collegiate level (Alabama Adapted Athletics, 2020a). The University of Houston and Clemson University made their first appearance at the national tournament and schools like the University of Michigan are likely to be next in line (Maher, 2019). Wheelchair tennis also uses a classification system and has two divisions. There is the Quad Division for athletes that have a permanent disability resulting in loss of function in lower and upper extremities. The other division is the Open Division, for

athletes with a permanent disability that results in substantial loss of function in one or both lower extremities (ITF, 2019).

Wheelchair Track. Schools that offer wheelchair track include University of Arizona, University of Illinois and the University of Texas Arlington (AbleThrive, 2016). The University of Alabama has had success with their basketball and tennis programming and have targeted track as an emerging sport for their adaptive athletics program (Alabama Adapted Athletics, 2020b). There are many classification categories in Para Athletics, however collegiate track programs primarily focus on wheelchair track events (World Para Athletics, 2020; The University of Arizona: Disability Resource Center, 2020)

There are also numerous adaptive and Paralympic athletes that compete on varsity teams in the NCAA (not specifically with an adaptive sport program or team). These athletes include Hunter Woodhall (Track and Field at Arkansas), Sam Grewe (Track and Field at Notre Dame), Mia Zutter (Nordic Skiing at College of St. Scholastica) and others (Team USA, 2020a; Team USA, 2020b; Team USA, 2020c). Paralympic swimmers have also made competitive appearances at such events as the 2016 ECAC Open Swimming and Diving Championships (ECAC, 2016).

Social, Cultural and Societal Barriers for Adaptive Sport

Comparisons can be drawn between the narratives of female athletics and adaptive sports and their respective places in the NCAA sport system. Just as the sports domain has been socio-culturally reproduced as a hyper-masculine institution, those same values can be characterized as an ableist narrative (Messner, 2016; Brake, 2001). As a result, historically, there have not been the same athletic opportunities available for people with physical disabilities because it has been embedded socially, culturally and institutionally that the existing opportunities match the interests and needs of the population (Messner, 2016; Brake, 2001; Fay, 2011). However, taking a subordination and structuralist view, “Interest and ability rarely develop in a vacuum; they evolve as a function of opportunity and experience” (Brake, 2001). Moreover, the college athletic sphere is a reproduction of over-arching institutional embeddedness of inequality and until the Rehab Act and ADA were mandated, places of education themselves were physically inaccessible institutions. This physical inaccessibility is a manifestation of and transcends cultural norms. As a result, the exclusion of athletes with physical disabilities from the NCAA results in several injustices. First, the denial of equal athletic development opportunities at the

collegiate level (Fay, 2011; Comerford, 2018; Larkin, Cottingham & Pate, 2014). There is a developmental pipeline that exists in athletics, and the collegiate level plays two roles; it serves as a final destination for athletes looking to pair athletic and academic endeavours and an intermediary step for those looking to progress to the National and International level (Fay, 2011; Comerford, 2018). Second, the inequitable access to education (Larkin et al., 2014). Similar to what female athletes endured, the lack of institutional and financial support for adaptive athletic opportunities at the collegiate level limits the access to educational opportunities for people with physical disabilities by means of sport (Brake, 2001). Additionally, institutions themselves have played a role in shaping the interests, abilities and aspirations of athletes with physical disabilities by not providing similar opportunities as for their able-bodied counterparts (Brake, 2001). Third, the inequitable access to resources, both physical and financial. For existing adaptive athletic programs in US colleges, most exist outside of their school's athletic department, typically either with the faculty of medicine or kinesiology and other departments. As a result, adaptive athletic programs do not have the same access to physical training resources that athletic teams do that are varsity sports housed in the school's athletic department. Overall, the narrative that athletes with physical disabilities have experienced has many connections to the inequities that women faced as well. It is important to remember, just as women are actively working to create their own unique narrative and identity in sport, adaptive sport athletes are as well.

The reason for change is not just to remedy the inequities discussed earlier, but also the multitude of benefits and unique narrative that can arise from the inclusion of adaptive sports in the NCAA system. More and new opportunities for athletes with physical disabilities at all competition levels, increased participation numbers in adaptive sports at all competition levels, elevated levels of competition, new streams of donor or sponsorship support and most importantly for the NCAA, a resolved and strengthened claim to its normative legitimacy (Fay, 2011; Comerford, 2018; Larkin et al., 2014; Black, 2008).

ECAC Inclusive Sport Initiative

Literature examining the cross-section of adaptive sports and the NCAA highlights actions that have already been taken and prospective avenues that could impart critical change. In response to the 2013 Dear Colleague Letter, the Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC) adopted an "Inclusive Sport Initiative" that focused on creating and expanding opportunities for

student athletes with physical disabilities at the college level (Ackerman & Fay, 2016; Comerford, 2018). In 2016 the ECAC hosted an integrated individual para sport event as part of its Open Swimming and Diving Championship (ECAC, 2016). What drove the creation of the ECAC Inclusive Sport Initiative, and as was referenced earlier, were some of the recommendations provided in the 2013 Dear Colleague Letter. The ECAC developed the “4 Principles of Sport Inclusion” (Ackerman & Fay, 2016). The emphasis of the ECAC inclusive sport initiative is that these strategies are driven by a goal of “inclusive sport”, sport that can be enjoyed by all and inclusive for all. The four principles of sport inclusion will be briefly described in this section.

Principle 1. Student athletes with disabilities compete in NCAA conference leagues and championships without accommodation when their disability does not affect performance in that sport and/or when their personal capacity and preparation enable them to overcome their disability on the field of play (Ackerman & Fay, 2016). An example of this would be Shaquem Griffin, the NFL player on the Seattle Seahawks that was born with amniotic band syndrome and has one hand (Rodrigue, 2018).

Principle 2. NCAA conference provides reasonable accommodations to athletes with disabilities in all its leagues and championships where such accommodations do not alter fundamentals of the sport or provide the student athlete with a disability an advantage over other competitors. The focus is on providing the individual athlete a minimal and reasonable accommodation. This would allow a student with a disability to have an equal opportunity to try out to participate in existing intercollegiate varsity sports (Ackerman & Fay, 2016). An example would be to lower the starting height of a high jump event at track and field competitions to allow for Paralympic level high jumpers to compete.

Principle 3. The addition of a limited program of adaptive events (e.g. 800m wheelchair track race) at existing NCAA Championships to accommodate student athletes with certain disabilities who cannot reasonably compete in open events despite their athletic capacity and preparation. Entry in these adaptive events will be subject to Championship regulations, such as team membership, and sport-specific qualification/performance standards. These “adaptive or Para events” are specifically designed to provide reasonable accommodations for students with physical and/or sensory disabilities who are otherwise qualified, but currently have no option or opportunity to compete (Ackerman & Fay, 2016). Two examples can be brought forward (but

not limited to). First, the addition of a wheelchair track event at an existing NCAA track and field meet. The other, the addition of wheelchair tennis matches to existing NCAA tennis matches and competitions.

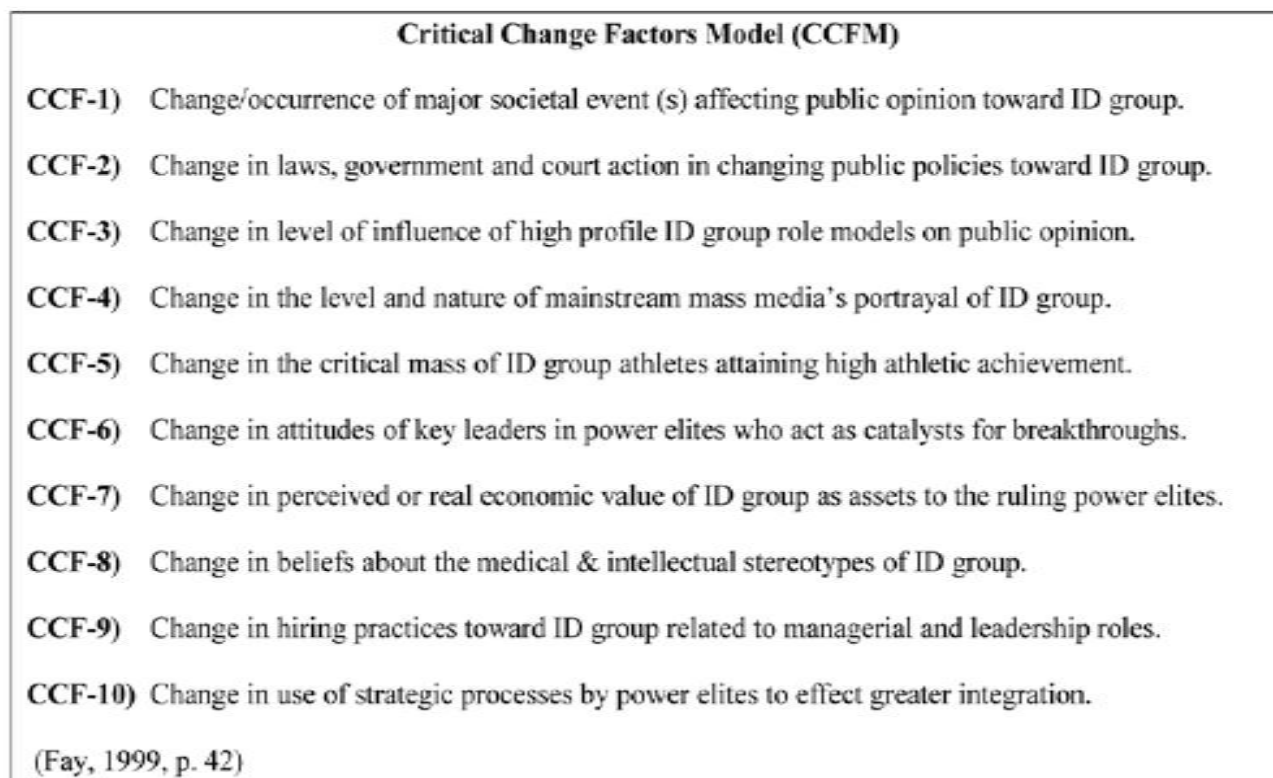
Principle 4. The formation of new NCAA tournaments, leagues and championships in selected Paralympic sports (e.g. wheelchair basketball) in which member colleges and universities may enter teams of student athletes with and without disabilities. This would mean adding new team sports that are specifically designed to provide reasonable accommodations for students with physical and/or sensory disabilities in team sports who are otherwise qualified, but currently have little to no option to compete. These sports would require new NCAA and conference policies along with specific competition rule accommodations that would permit the participation of student athletes with and without disabilities to compete together on the same team (Ackerman & Fay, 2016).

Critical Change Factor Model

As discussed in the section on legitimacy and the NCAA, the opportunity to impart a positive change towards the inclusion of adaptive sport lies within the interdependent network that makes up the NCAA and the normative values upon which the NCAA has constructed its legitimacy. Therefore, it is necessary to examine how those changes could potentially occur that will lead to greater inclusion of athletes with physical disabilities and adaptive sport in collegiate athletics (Fay, 1999).

In Fay's paper, "Race, Gender, and Disability: A new paradigm towards full participation and equal opportunity in sport" (1999), the author established the Critical Change Factors Model (CCFM). The CCFM is a framework based off of equity, critical social and open-systems theories with the purpose of being able to conceptualize and understand change factors and their relative importance in social systems (Fay, 1999). The CCFM and the 10 identified factors is presented below.

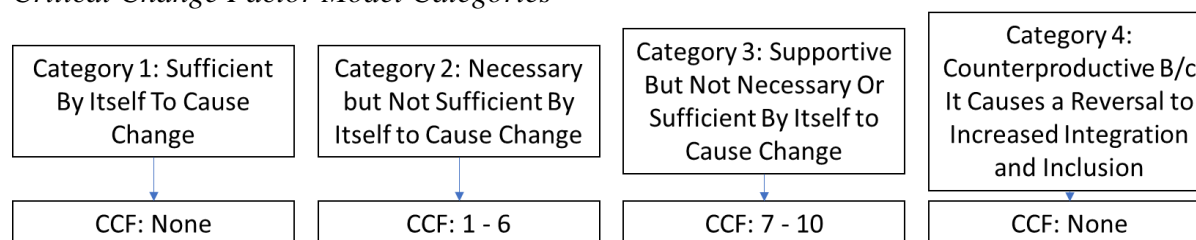
Figure 1
Critical Change Factor Model



Note. This figure displays the critical change factor model from Fay's, "Race, Gender, and Disability: A new paradigm towards full participation and equal opportunity in sport" (1999).

The critical change factors are further grouped into four categories (Fay, 1999).

Figure 2
Critical Change Factor Model Categories



Note. This figure displays the four categories of the critical change factor model (Fay, 1999).

The CCFM will be important for the purpose of identifying critical change factors that can help the growth of adaptive sport.

Why Pursue NCAA Status?

There remains the question of why NCAA status is or would be a worthwhile pursuit for adaptive sports. There are arguments for both sides. Currently, almost all adaptive sport programs in U.S. colleges are housed outside of athletics, ranging from the faculty of medicine, kinesiology, education and more. As a result, despite their high level of competition in their respective sports, the time they sacrifice for training and the fact that some of them compete (or will) at the Paralympics, they may be perceived with less recognition because they are not part of their athletic departments with all other varsity sports. So, the pursuit of varsity status, and further, the attainment of NCAA status could provide a source of legitimacy, recognition and respect for adaptive sport (Larkin et al., 2014). It could also lead to the possible growth of sport participation levels and critical mass, just as female sports experienced when they became emerging sports and eventually championship sports (Larkin et al., 2014). However, it is recognized that departure from current organizational structures of adaptive sport to the NCAA model could prove problematic because of all the policies and regulations that come with the status. Additionally, if legitimacy is what is being sought after, other avenues could be explored as well, such as the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA). Something that must be considered though, is that if legitimacy is the end goal, the accompanying rules and regulations are not mutually exclusive, sacrifices will have to be made.

Lessons to Learn from Female Sports

Drawing upon the previous section regarding female sports in the NCAA, there are potentially useful avenues that adaptive sports could pursue.

Emerging Adaptive Sport Status. A research paper by Larkin, Cottingham and Pate (2014) provides considerations and arguments supporting the application of the Emerging Sports for Women program to wheelchair basketball. Currently, there is no such program that exists to support adaptive sport, but the benefits it had for female athletics can be used to support why a similar program could help collegiate adaptive sport. The NCAA created and supports the program for women because it provides an opportunity for the growth of female athletic programming (NCAA, 2020e). There are several benefits that adaptive sport could experience through an emerging sport program. Benefits can include increased exposure, the removal of barriers that prevent institutions from sponsoring the sport, financial support and increase in participation levels (Larkin et al., 2014). It is important to remember, disability is one of the five

areas of inclusion that the NCAA has identified and an “Emerging Adaptive Sport” program could be of benefit to support this area of inclusion. While one cannot expect equal outcome, there must be an opportunity to begin with, there must be a support system in place that levels the playing field.

Emerging Sport Considerations. Larkin et al. (2014) discovered five primary concerns when considering an emerging sport status for wheelchair basketball. First, there are currently only 13 schools that compete in wheelchair basketball, not the 20 that is required by female standards. The author argues that the consistency and longevity of programs should be considered here (Larkin et al., 2014). As mentioned earlier, some of these programs have been competing for approximately 70 years. Second, the wheelchair basketball programs span the three Divisions of the NCAA. This creates a complication, but not unprecedented, as the NCAA has rules that accommodate cross divisional play (Larkin et al., 2014). The problem it does create is a potential disparity between programs because Division 1 and 2 schools can offer athletic scholarships. Third, wheelchair basketball currently allows five years of eligibility, whereas the NCAA only allows four. The eligibility duration for wheelchair basketball helps with participation levels and competitive consistency. Fourth, Title IX compliance is a major decision criterion for members of the NCAA and could prove to be a difficulty for programs that don’t offer women’s teams. Fifth, just because there are support systems in place doesn’t mean institutions will buy in and support the development of teams (Larkin et al., 2014).

While the study by Larkin et al. (2014) reveals some considerations for adaptive sports, current NCAA and emerging sport material can be examined as well to find out some of the key issues that would have to be addressed by adaptive sport. The NCAA states that other considerations (apart from the minimum 20 sponsors) include health and safety, growth potential, economic viability, NCAA governance and legislation and other applicant sports pursuing membership (NCAA, 2020f). Additionally, looking at the key selling points for STUNT as they try to become an NCAA emerging sport provides some further indicators for what the NCAA looks for in a sport. The advantages of STUNT include being able to assist with athletic department Title IX compliance (due to the high number of female participants), minimal facility resource requirements, it is easy to understand and follow along, it has a large recruiting base and its popularity (USA Cheer, 2019). These are all aspects that adaptive sport must consider to increase its appeal to athletic departments and the NCAA.

Senior Inclusion Administrator and the Case for Inclusion. Just as it is important for women to have their voice heard and be represented, the same reasoning can be used for the importance to advocate for people with disabilities. It must not be forgotten that disability is one of the five pillars of inclusion identified by the NCAA (NCAA, 2020d). If any hope of progress is to be made, there must be more intent with how each of these pillars is supported. It must be recognized that Universities do have disability resource centres/departments, but there is no one that definitively advocates for them in an athletic setting, despite the existence of athletes with disabilities that compete in the NCAA. While it could be argued that there are not enough adaptive or Paralympic athletes to warrant such a designation or position, it must be remembered that, “interest and ability rarely develop in a vacuum” (Brake, 2001). Furthermore, it could be argued that by not having representational and meaningful leadership that advocates for them, athletes with physical disabilities could be self-selecting out of the athletic development pipeline (McKinsey & Company, 2019). Ultimately, there is a lot to be gained if diversity and inclusion is embraced. However, it is important to distinguish between the two because treating those words as the same can lead to ineffectiveness (Sherbin & Rashid, 2017). As quoted in a Harvard Business Review article, “Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance” (Sherbin & Rashid, 2017).

Just as any company, if schools and governing organizations like the NCAA hope to remain relevant, important and in control, they must address the changing needs of those they serve. Strategically, human capital can be a source of great competitive advantage when utilized to full effect by tapping into the diverse backgrounds and perspectives people have to offer (Slater, Weigand & Zwirlein, 2008). However, over simplistically, those strategic gains require two steps. First, there must be purposeful action taken to “make room at the table”. Second, there must be a commitment to meaningful engagement, inclusion and open-mindedness once the right mix of people are in the room. This results in a broader consideration of issues when making decisions (Slater et al., 2008). Furthermore, innovation can be derived from conversations, passions and opportunities that lie outside of an organization’s normal repertoire and a greater breadth to take on new challenges (Slater et al., 2008). What ultimately makes positions like the SWA impactful and drive organizational health and performance is when there is a commitment to an inclusive culture (McKinsey & Company, 2019). Regardless of whether it’s a SWA, a

Senior Inclusion Administrator or a Senior Disability Administrator, these points must be taken into consideration because otherwise all that is being done is “ticking a box” or “filling a quota”.

To make a designation like the SWA (or a new senior inclusion administrator) effective, the NCAA advises that there are five ways of optimizing the SWA role. First, capitalize on diverse leadership perspectives. Second, share a commitment to equity and well-being. Third, support training and mentoring opportunities. Fourth, involve SWAs in conference governance. Fifth, engage SWAs in National issues (NCAA, 2018).

Lessons to Learn from Esports

One of the fastest growing sports internationally is Esports. At the outset, this sub-topic appears to be out of context, but it is being discussed in this background because of the transferrable lessons that can be learned about its success and growth. There are limited academic papers on the topic because Esports is very new, but there are a lot of news articles and reports on this new sport. Regardless of one’s personal beliefs as to whether Esports is a sport, the success cannot be denied. Below are some key points that could have transferrable value for the growth of adaptive sport.

Highschool Participation and Support. Esports companies have invested in supporting the development of programming, participation and competition at the high school level (McGrath, 2019; CBS News, 2019; Venero, 2020). They have done this by providing resources and materials to help the development of gaming labs, fund equipment acquisition, set up clubs and organize matches (McGrath, 2019; CBS News, 2019; Venero, 2020). What this accomplishes is the creation of a critical mass of e-athletes to recruit from, a demand that will have to be answered by colleges and universities if they want to capitalize on this new wave opportunity and the revenue generation that can result from increased enrollment (Keiper, Manning, Jenny, Olrich & Croft, 2017; Hendrickson, 2018).

Scholarships. Part of what is driving growth at the high school level and making Esports successful at the collegiate level is the offering of scholarships. When there are more than 170 U.S. colleges that have varsity Esports programs and offer about \$16 million per year in scholarships, high school students and parents take notice (Venero, 2020; McGrath, 2019). A parent was quoted that when he learned there were \$400,000 worth of scholarships given to seniors at his son’s high school the previous year, he was in full support of helping his child make that become a reality (McGrath, 2019). Kurt Melcher, the associate athletics director at

Robert Morris college, helped created the first varsity Esports team at an American university and offer scholarships under the athletic department (Hendrickson, 2018). Melcher noted that they tapped into an unmet demand when they received over 3,000 inquiries from potential applicants in two weeks (Hendrickson, 2018).

Development Pathway and Access to Education. Esports has satisfied the market in two ways with respect to a development pathway. By investing in high school and college programs, it incentivizes e-athletes to commit to Esports beyond being a simple hobby. It also creates a pathway of development for people to progress through the school system to a professional level. Lastly, the existence of college programming, and the scholarships that are offered, create opportunities to access education and incentivize e-athletes to attend colleges that have programming (Robison, 2018).

Media Coverage and Sponsorship. The level of media coverage, sponsorship and money that has come to be associated with Esports has certainly had an impact on its growth. ESPN covers a variety of Esports events on a selection of platforms (Keiper et al., 2017). For example, in 2014, they covered the pre-game analysis and the main event for the International DotA 2 Championships in Seattle, Washington (Keiper et al., 2017). Viewing sizes for Esports events draw mass online viewership that rival major sporting events, like the League of Legends 2017 championship that had 57.6 million online viewers (Hendrickson, 2018). Even at the collegiate level, a college cited getting more than 500 viewers at live matches in the early days of its program, which exceeded live viewership for other sports events (Hendrickson, 2018).

Key Leadership and Institutional Support. A reason why Esports is growing in the collegiate space is the growing support from key leaders and their respective institutions. Leadership and institutions recognize the market that they can serve by offering an Esports program and thereby increase enrollment at schools. Research suggests that approximately 90 percent of kids aged 13 to 17 play video games in the United States and there are over 100 high schools in the United States (and rapidly growing) that offer Esports alongside their traditional sports (CBS News, 2019; Venero, 2020). Part of what makes the creation of programming an easier decision for colleges is that it can be run as a coed program and help with Title IX, it adds to the school's diversity and there are no operations costs that traditional sports have like transportation and accommodation since everything can be played online (Keiper et al., 2017; Hendrickson, 2018). As a result of the factors mentioned earlier, and ease of implementation, it

has resulted in the Division 3 Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference to sponsor it as a conference championship, which is likely to encourage further program growth in and outside the conference (Hendrickson, 2018). Esports competitions have risen to a scale where Presidents and athletic leaders at collegiate institutions are worried about being left behind (Hendrickson, 2018). It is not surprising then that universities are committing large sums of money towards building Esport facilities to attract students (Hendrickson, 2018).

Looking at the CCFM, the trends outlined in Esports satisfy critical change factors one, three, four, five, six and seven. Esports has managed to tap into change factors that are necessary and supportive for causing change as per Fay's categorization of the different factors (Fay, 1999). This observation yields two possible conclusions. First, understanding the development and growth of emerging sports such as STUNT and Esports can yield answers with regard to how to grow adaptive sport at the collegiate level. Second, the CCFM proposed by Fay can hold great value as to determining the most effective path for change to help collegiate adaptive sport grow.

Summary of Background and Themes

Based on the literature and research presented, four themes stand out with regard to the advancement of collegiate adaptive sport.

First, there are legal aspects such as Title IX, the Rehabilitation Act, ADA and Dear Colleague Letter: Students with Disabilities in Extracurricular Athletics that shape the current landscape of collegiate adaptive sports. Opportunities for change exist in the unclarity of whether the NCAA is a direct or indirect recipient of federal funds, the unclear definition of "major life activity" and using the Dear Colleague letter to inform strategies to support the development of inclusive sport initiatives. This study will focus on the latter two opportunities.

Second, the greatest momentum for change in the NCAA will come from internal pressure due to its power being rooted in the existing interdependent networks of its members. The NCAA has claims to legitimacy pragmatically, morally and cognitively. Cognitive legitimacy is difficult to contest (Black, 2008; Suchman, 1995). However, pragmatic and moral legitimacy depend upon the normative values that are held by every member institution in the NCAA (Black, 2008; Suchman, 1995). A collective shift in normative values would spark a significant threat to the NCAA's claim to legitimacy and a resolution would have to be attained to maintain governance (Black, 2008; Suchman, 1995). More specifically, if individual

institutions and conferences took a leadership role in championing change for adaptive sport inclusion, it could pressure the interdependent network of the NCAA to follow.

Third, the female sport experience has been one of uphill battle in a sociocultural setting that is deeply rooted in hypermasculinity. As a result, they faced inequality rooted in sources of subordination and structuralism. Title IX and the three-part effective accommodation test was part of what initially created opportunity for females in collegiate sports. Over the years more of an active effort has been taken by institutions and the NCAA that have resulted in such initiatives as the Gender Equity Task Force, the Senior Woman Administrator designation and the Emerging Sports for Women program. While there is more work to be done for the equity women deserve, there are lessons to be learned from their success and setbacks thus far that are relatable to the adaptive sport experience.

Fourth, the advancement of adaptive sport, whether at the NCAA level or not, will require change in the current sport system. Fay's CCFM communicates a framework through which adaptive sport leaders can begin to understand what change factors will be effective. Furthermore, it will be imperative to understand the successful experiences others have had in growing their movement or sport. Looking at female athletics, this could exist, as Larkin et al. (2014) suggests, in a new emerging sport status that helps facilitate the institutional adoption of sports like wheelchair basketball. There is also the value that a leader and advocate for disability could have in the athletic setting just as the SWA does. It is also important to look at Esports because of the recent success they have had not only in growth and awareness, but also how they have become "institutionalized" by investing in high school programming.

The central research question still remains, is there a case for adaptive sports to become part of the NCAA? What would be insightful to inform or generate answers to this immense question is getting the perspectives of the stakeholders involved in advancing adaptive sport at the collegiate level. As discussed in the study by Larkin et al., "It is recommended that future research focus on direct communication with all stakeholders in this project ... direct communication with relevant stakeholders would add another layer of support and credibility" (2014).

Part III. Research Approach, Hypotheses & Methodology

The central question of this research study is to examine whether there is a case for the inclusion of adaptive sport in the NCAA. The central question is complex because there are multiple elements that form a holistic view of collegiate adaptive sports in the United States. Through the literature review five major elements were identified as important in examining whether there is a case for the inclusion of adaptive sport in the NCAA. Taking the recommendations from the study done by Larkin et al. (2014), primary research was conducted with stakeholders that have vested interest and influence in this topic. The primary research was conducted through open-ended interviews and the responses were thematically analyzed. The thematic responses were dependent on the stakeholder because each group has different motives, aspirations, experiences, obligations and opinions as indicated by Larkin et al (2014). This section will begin by presenting the independent and dependent variables for this study, then present the hypotheses and conclude with the methodology used to carry out the study.

Research Approach

This section will discuss independent and dependent variables for the study.

The Independent Variable

There are numerous stakeholders involved in the field of collegiate adaptive sports in the United States and have been identified as the independent variable in this study. These stakeholders may or may not be conflicting in opinion but nonetheless hold great influence in the fate of adaptive athletic programs in U.S. colleges. Therefore, with regards to the questions that will be asked in the study, there will likely be varied results from the qualitative interviews between the stakeholders. For this study, the aggregate level responses and where stakeholder groups differ in their responses will be analyzed.

Stakeholder Groups Involved in this Study. Based on the literature review there are several stakeholder groups involved in this study.

Group A: U.S. Collegiate Adaptive Athletes: Current & Former. These people have the lived experience of being adaptive athletes. The purpose of coordinating athletics and having governing institutions and bodies that oversee athletics is for the athletes. Therefore, it is important to understand their perspective because the end product (the sporting experience) is their lived experience. In reference to the literature review, the narrative of sport for people with physical disabilities is distinct from their able-bodied counterparts that compete at the NCAA

level (Messner, 2016; Brake, 2001). For this study, athletes will be recruited from U.S. colleges that have adaptive athletic programming (Refer to Appendix C) (AbleThrive, 2016).

Group B: U.S. Collegiate Adaptive Athletic Program Staff. This group of people is at the forefront of coordinating, managing, coaching and dealing with administrative, policy, legal and bureaucratic issues regarding adaptive sport. In their position their direct concern regards the adaptive sports they work with and as a result will be driven to serve the best interest of adaptive sports. This group will be recruited from U.S. colleges that have adaptive athletic programming (Refer to Appendix C) (AbleThrive, 2016). This group includes program volunteers, coaches, managers, coordinators, administrators, directors and disability resource center staff that are involved with their institution's adaptive sport programming. It is important to note that a number of participants in Group B were former collegiate adaptive sport athletes.

Group C: U.S. Collegiate Athletic Department (NCAA) Staff. This group has a primary concern regarding the athletic, academic and fiscal success of their respective programs. This group includes athletic directors, assistant athletic directors, deputy athletic directors, associate athletic directors and senior woman administrators. These are the people who hold great influence at their school, but also, amongst the interdependent network that makes up the NCAA. This group's view will be different from the others' because they do not have the same direct concern regarding adaptive sport. This raises questions around multiple accountability relationships discussed in the literature (Black, 2008). While they are responsible for delivering athletic opportunities for students at their school, they are also accountable to the University fiscally because they operate the athletic department on a budget.

Group D: External Adaptive Sport Organizations (e.g. National Governing Sport Bodies). The situation regarding adaptive sports at the collegiate level in the United States should be of direct concern for external organizations affiliated with the adaptive sport community. For example, athletics at the collegiate level fits into the athlete development pipeline for elite athletes at the National and International stage (Fay, 2011; Comerford, 2018). These external organizations and national governing sport bodies of sport (NGBs) (e.g. the National Wheelchair Basketball Association and United States Tennis Association) play a critical role in creating and implementing policies and creating and sharing resources that can facilitate the growth of their respective sport.

Group E: NCAA Office of Inclusion. The responses from this group of people represents the views of the NCAA. Their perspective holds fundamental value to the purpose of this study because it is within their power, the NCAA, to impart change from the top-down. The NCAA has a convoluted structure and as a polycentric regime relies on its interconnectedness with its member committees and organizations (Black, 2008). It is also constrained in its actions by multiple accountability relationships, most notably its fiscal and moral obligations, which construct its legitimacy (Black, 2008). Considering that the Office of Inclusion has identified disability as one of the core areas of inclusion, they will have a relevant perspective on the topic.

The Dependent Variables

Variable 1: What are the Barriers and Challenges for Collegiate Adaptive Sport?

This category is intended to bring to light the barriers that exist for the adaptive sport movement at this current time. This is important to understand because stakeholders will have different perspectives on what barriers exist based on their experiences and which ones are most critical to address. Furthermore, stakeholders will also have different perspectives on the source of these barriers and challenges and the best way to address them.

Variable 2: What are the Growth Opportunities for Collegiate Adaptive Sport? This category builds off the previous one in that it is intended to address the opportunities for growth of collegiate adaptive sport. This category will explore the critical change factors that will not only be required to drive change but also be effective. This is further supported by themes and best practices that can be taken from STUNT and Esports. This dependent variable is linked to the stakeholder because each group has a different perspective on what is necessary and will be effective for the growth of collegiate adaptive sports.

This category also explores the obligations of the NCAA and its member institutions and committees to push for positive change in adaptive sports. As discussed in the literature review, the NCAA's legitimacy depends on its interdependent relationships with the athletes, institutions, conferences and committees that make up the NCAA (Black, 2008). The answer as to who is accountable for supporting and progressing adaptive sport is then unclear because of the interdependent and layered bureaucratic structure of the NCAA. This category will explore how stakeholder groups can be involved and contribute to the growth of collegiate adaptive sport. For change to occur, there must be a collective effort from stakeholder groups involved.

This dependent variable is linked to the stakeholder because each group will have their own opinion as to who is responsible for driving change in this space and who needs to be involved.

Variable 3: What Are Goals for the Future of Collegiate Adaptive Sport? This category is intended to explore two items. First, the next steps that should be taken to further the progress of adaptive sports programs in the US collegiate system. Second, explore whether the NCAA is a desirable and realistic end goal for adaptive sports. Whether or not NCAA sanctioning is the end goal, there are other steps that may need to be achieved first to build stronger institutional support for adaptive sport. As discussed in the literature review, there are several gaps in adaptive athletic programming at the collegiate level in the US when compared to able-bodied collegiate athletic programs (Comerford, 2018; Larkin et al., 2014). For example, most programs are not affiliated with their institution's athletic department and they do not have access to the same physical and financial resources that able-bodied teams do. However, there must be a recognition that integrating with athletic departments and the NCAA will come with more stringent regulations and policies. This dependent variable is linked to the stakeholder because each group may see a different path for this change to happen and what the end goal should be. For example, adaptive sports programs may feel like the status quo meets their needs as a program and do not want to relinquish control or governance.

This category also explores the considerations that are involved in the decision-making for athletic departments when deciding which sports become varsity sports. By understanding the criteria athletic departments consider, a more detailed growth plan for adaptive sport can be created that is in line with those goals. Furthermore, the ways in which institutions and organizations can actively support adaptive sport can be identified more specifically.

Variable 4: What are Integration Strategies for Collegiate Adaptive Sport in the NCAA? This category is intended to examine possible ways that adaptive sport programming can grow at the collegiate level and integrate with existing sport infrastructure. This is important to examine for several reasons. First, there currently are Paralympians that compete at the NCAA level. However, the mainstream sport system is arguably not what got them there. There must be a way that institutions and organizations, like the NCAA, can support the athletic pursuits of these high-performance athletes with more intent. Second, and building off the first point, the ECAC has come up with an inclusive sport model that is thorough and theoretically sound. It must be examined further as to its practicality, feasibility and how it can be implemented in other

settings. Third, for adaptive sports to reach a critical mass of athletes or participants, new or modified strategies must be employed. For example, looking at Canada and how they use able-body participation to increase participation numbers.

Variable 5: Is Sport a Major Life Activity? This category is meant to explore potential new applications of the ADA and Rehab Act to colleges and the NCAA. Building off the background and discussion regarding the definition of “major life activity”, it could be argued that sport is a major life activity. It would be worth determining if stakeholders involved would define major life activity in such a way and why. While the results of this study would by no means hold any legal value, it could inform future work and conversation on the topic. If sport would be considered a major life activity in the future, it would have great implications for how the ADA and Rehab Act impact colleges and the NCAA.

In summary, the central question being examined by this study is whether there is a case for the inclusion of adaptive sports to be part of the NCAA in the future. Stakeholder groups have been identified as the independent variable for this research question. The broad central question has been broken down into five categories of questions that provide a more holistic analysis of the landscape that shapes collegiate adaptive sports in the United States. The categories of questions address barriers and challenges, opportunities for growth, goals for the future, integration strategies and sport as a major life activity.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are based on the independent and dependent variables previously discussed. The hypotheses and rationale have been developed using the literature review. The hypothesis for each category is for the aggregate level response from stakeholders (all participant responses compiled together).

Variable 1: Barriers and Challenges: Hypothesis 1

I hypothesize that participants will identify participation levels and perceptions of adaptive sport as the greatest challenge for the growth of adaptive sport.

Rationale. Based on materials in the background, specifically the emerging sport criteria and the key points from STUNT and Esports, athletic departments and the NCAA will be more likely to support a sport that has strong participation and a large recruitment base (NCAA, 2020f). Therefore, it will be agreed upon by all groups that participation numbers are one of the major challenges for adaptive sport right now that is limiting its growth and institutional support.

It was also discussed that the sports realm is rooted in hyper-masculinity and as a by-product is ableist in nature (Brake, 2001). These socio-cultural views result in structural barriers that limit sport opportunities and discourage participation for persons with a physical disability.

Furthermore, it creates a situation where those in leadership positions are not educated in, aware of adaptive sport or understand how to create inclusive opportunities resulting in lack of progress for adaptive sport. As a result, perceptions of adaptive sport will be brought up as a key barrier to the growth of adaptive sport as well.

Variable 2: Opportunities for Growth: Hypothesis 2

I hypothesize that participants will identify top-down initiatives from the NCAA as the greatest opportunity for the growth of collegiate adaptive sports.

Rationale. Based on the content about legitimacy, it is understood that people look to the organizations that govern the activities or institutions they belong to “to do the right thing” based on their collective normative values. As a result, participants will look upon the NCAA as being responsible to lead initiatives and set standards for diversity and inclusion and follow the policies that are put in place. Therefore, on the topic of adaptive sport at the collegiate level, participants will identify that the most promising opportunities for growth will be initiatives or actions from the NCAA.

Variable 3: Goals for the Future: Hypothesis 3

I hypothesize that participants will identify varsity and NCAA status as desirable and attainable in the future for adaptive sport.

Rationale. The pursuit of varsity status, and further, the attainment of NCAA status could provide a source of legitimacy, recognition and respect for adaptive sport (Larkin et al., 2014). It could also lead to the possible growth of sport participation levels and critical mass, just as female sports experienced when they became emerging sports and eventually championship sports (Larkin et al., 2014). However, it is recognized that departure from current organizational structures of adaptive sport to the NCAA model could prove problematic because of all the policies and regulations that come with the status. This particularly becomes a problem for sports like wheelchair basketball that are currently inter-divisional because D1 and D2 schools can give athletic scholarships, whereas D3 schools can not. Additionally, if legitimacy is what is being sought after, other avenues could be explored as well, such as the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA). Something that must be considered though, is that if

legitimacy is the end goal, the accompanying rules and regulations are not mutually exclusive, sacrifices will have to be made.

Variable 4: Integration Strategies: Hypothesis 4

I hypothesize that participants will identify Principles 1 through 3 of the ECAC's "Four Principles of Sport Inclusion" as attainable in the short-term and Principle 4 as the most difficult.

Rationale. Groups will agree that principles 1 and 2 are practical because there have been NCAA athletes past and present that fit in those categories. All principle 1 and 2 do is provide clearer guidelines and suggestions to make inclusion and integration of those athletes more effective and purposeful. Principle 3 will be seen as a practical strategy because it takes minimal resources to accomplish. The events and infrastructure already exist, its just a matter of adding on additional events. Groups will also agree that able-body inclusion in team sports such as wheelchair basketball will be a necessity for principle 4 to work because it will grow the critical mass of athletes required to create competition at a conference level.

Variable 5: Major Life Activity: Hypothesis 5

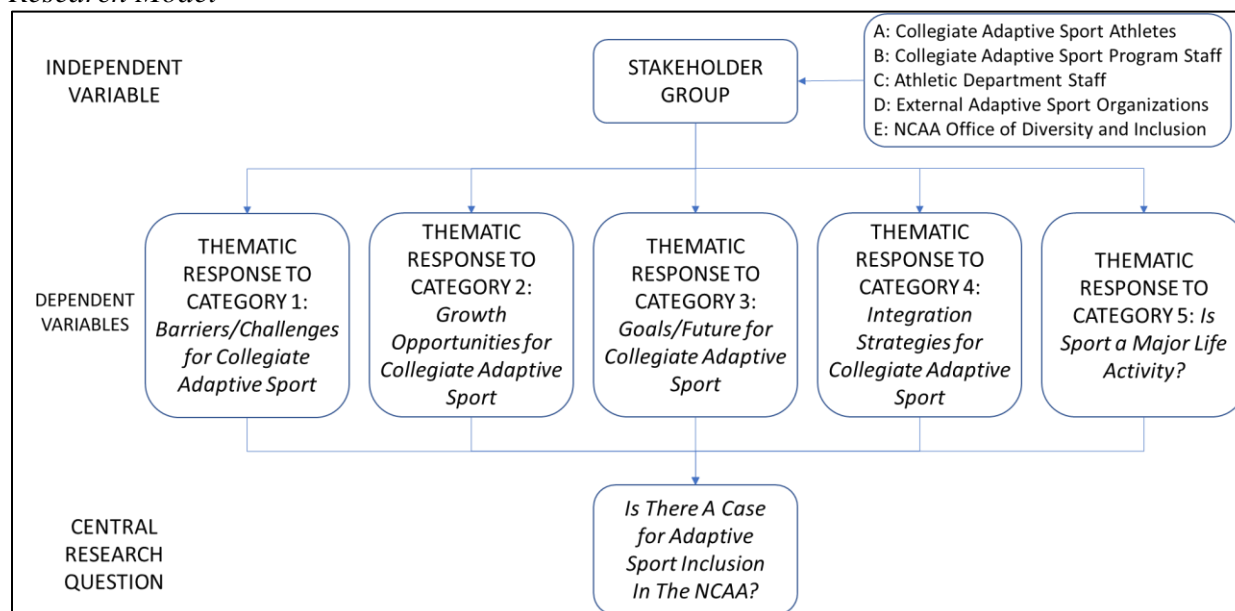
I hypothesize that participants will define sport as a major life activity.

Rationale. Groups will agree that sport is a major life activity because the identified groups are all affiliated with sport in some way and are biased towards their perceptions about sport. However, groups will differ on their reasons why sport is a major life activity because of the intrinsic value it has for them. For example, it was discussed in the background that adaptive athletes have their own unique narrative in sport based on their lived experiences. As a result, they will identify reasons that are more intrinsically driven and tied to their identity.

Research Model

Displayed in figure 3 below is the research model that connects the independent variable, dependent variables and the central research question. As stated previously, the best way to understand the central research question regarding the status of collegiate adaptive sports in the United States is to take a holistic approach to understand the contextual landscape. The five categories of questions have been developed based on the literature review.

Figure 3
Research Model



Note. Depicted above are the identified independent and dependent variables for this study. On top is the independent variable (the stakeholder). Stakeholder group is an independent variable because they have different lived experiences, opinions, objectives and obligations given their position in relation to the field of study. In the middle are the dependent variables. The central question of whether there is a case for adaptive sports to be part of the NCAA is the broader goal of this study. To study this topic comprehensively, the central question has been broken down into categorical questions that examine barriers and challenges, opportunities for growth, goals for the future, integration strategies and whether sport is a major life activity. The themes that arise from the answers to these categorized questions will depend on which stakeholder group the participant belongs to.

Data Collection

This section will discuss the qualitative interview outline, selection process of participants and participation in the study, and the data collection process.

Qualitative Interviews

The research was conducted through qualitative interviews with participants that belong to each stakeholder group. The interview outline can be located in Appendix D. Each question in the interview outline has a theme, or several, that are associated with it. The questions were categorized by dependent variable as follows:

- Variable 1: What are the barriers and challenges for collegiate adaptive sport?
 - Interview Questions: 1, 2, 3, 4, 12, 13 & 14
- Variable 2: What are the growth opportunities for collegiate adaptive sport?
 - Interview Questions: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 12

- Variable 3: What are the goals for the future of collegiate adaptive sport?
 - Interview Questions: 6, 7 & 11
- Variable 4: What are integration strategies for collegiate adaptive sport in the NCAA?
 - Interview Questions: 8, 9 & 10
- Variable 5: Is sport a major life activity?
 - Interview Question: 15

Selection Process and Participation

Participants from Group A (current and former collegiate adaptive sport athletes) and B (collegiate adaptive sport program staff) were recruited from schools that have adaptive athletic programming. There are currently 21 colleges in the United States that have adapted athletic programming in varying levels of capacity; competitive, recreational and drop-in (Refer to Appendix C). Participants from Group C (athletic department staff) will be recruited from D1, D2 and D3 NCAA colleges in the United States. Participants from Group D will be recruited from national governing sport bodies and community oriented adaptive sport programs (e.g. National Wheelchair Basketball Association and United States Tennis Association). Participants from Group E will be recruited through the NCAA Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Participants for the study are summarized in the table below. There were no participants in this study from stakeholder group E, so they were not included in the analysis, results and discussion. A more detailed breakdown of the demographics is provided in the results section.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant Demographics	
Stakeholder Group	Number of Participants
A	3
B	21
C	8
D	6
E	0
Total	38

Data Collection

Data for this study was collected through open-ended qualitative interviews with the participants. Participants were given the interview outline one day in advance of their interview. Participants were given the option to skip questions in the interview. For those that consented, the interview was audio recorded and transcribed afterwards. The purpose of the open-ended

interview format for this study was to do a thematic analysis to determine the themes for each dependent variable.

Data Analysis

This section will describe the process that was used to analyze the qualitative data from the interviews.

Data Infrastructure

The first necessary step was to create a simplified relational database for data analysis. This allowed for most efficient work in Excel and Tableau for visualizing and analyzing the data. At the core of the database are the tables listed below using “Participant Number” as the primary key. Information about sport affiliation, organization, division, conference and state was all found through public websites on Google.

Table 2

Stakeholder Group

Participant Number	Stakeholder Group
#	“X”

Table 3

Sport Affiliation

Participant Number	Sport Affiliation
#	“Y”

Table 4

Organization

Participant Number	Organization
#	“Z”

Table 5

Organization Information

Organization	Division	Conference	State
“Z”	(1, 2, 3 or N/A)	“D”	“E”

Table 6

Key Words

Participant Number	Question Number	Code	Key Word	Count
#	#	Able Bod	Able Body	#####

Table 7
Responses

Participant Number	Question Number	Response
#	#	“XXXX”

The interviews were transcribed and copied to the relational database using a method to separate participant identity from their answers to control for bias. The process involved randomly assigning each participant a numerical value (1 through 38) and having that numerical value attached to their stakeholder group and answer key. Once anonymized, all participants had their answers stored in the “Responses” table as shown above.

Thematic Analysis and Coding

The data from the qualitative interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis examines themes or patterns of data explicitly and implicitly (Caulfield, 2019). Thematic analysis was used because it can be used to explore lived experiences and perspectives of participants and the social construction of phenomena of social objects (Caulfield, 2019). This method of analysis is best suited for this study because it is trying to gain a comprehensive understanding of the landscape that affects collegiate adaptive sports in the United States. To do so, as discussed earlier, the perspectives of each stakeholder group are important to understand because they have different lived experiences, obligations and visions. Furthermore, one of the key aspects of this study is understanding the positioning of the NCAA as a polycentric governing organization, which is a socially constructed phenomenon. As a result, thematic analysis is best suited for uncovering themes that are discussed in the interviews explicitly and implicitly.

The process started with transcribing the interviews. The next step involved coding the data. A deductive approach was used, which involves looking for themes using existing theory (Caulfield, 2019). The research from the background was used to guide the coding. Once the data was coded it was grouped, segmented and analyzed to identify the themes of the data. It is not necessarily the frequency of occurrence of particular data that establishes a theme, but more so the relevance and significance of the data (Caulfield, 2019).

The codes used to analyze the data are provided below in table 8. As discussed, the codes were deduced from the background section of this study and the literature. The codes are located in the left column and they are grouped into categories in the right column.

Table 8
Code and Key Word List

Able bod	Able Body
Access	Access
Particip	Critical Mass
Number	Critical Mass
Critical Mass	Critical Mass
Adaptive	Adaptive
Cult	Culture
Admin	Administrator
Individual	Individual
Athletic Department	Athletic Department
Resourc	Resources
Busin	Business
Responsib	Responsibility
Champ	Championship
Change	Change
Coach	Coach
Colleg	University/College
Compet	Compete
We can	We can
Conference	Conference
Coord	Administrator
Create	Create
Dean	Dean
Director	Director
Disab	Disability
We need	We need
They Need	They Need
We Can	We Can
They Can	They Can
We are	We are
They are	They are
We have	We have
They have	They have
Education	Education
Employ	Employment
School	Education
Finance	Money
Fund	Money
Grants	Money
Money	Money
Scholar	Scholarship

Curric	Education
K through	K to 12
IEP	K to 12
Kids	K to 12
Female	Female
Inclusion	Inclusion
Institution	Institution
Lead	Leadership
Power	Power
Legit	Legitimacy
Lens	Lens
Perspect	Lens
Major Life	Major Life Activity
Law	Law/Policy
Rehab Act	Law/Policy
National Governing Body	NGB
NGB	NGB
NC	NCAA
Opport	Opportunity
Publicity	Media
Media	Media
Network	Media
ESPN	Media
Practical	Practical
Potentially	Uncertainty
President	President
Feasib	Practical
Partner	Partnership
Litig	Law/Policy
Question	Uncertainty
Relationship	Relationship
Sanction	Sanctioned
Division	Division
Population	Critical Mass
Popular	Popularity
Speak	Awareness
Varsity	Varsity
State	State
Strateg	Strategies
Talk	Awareness
Team	Team
Equal	Equity
Title	Title IX

Nine	Title IX
University	University/College
Win	Win
Women	Female
Aware	Awareness
Equit	Equity
Fair	Equity

Excel Formula

To analyze the transcribed data using the codes from the table above, the frequency of occurrence of each code in each response from the “Responses” table was counted. This was done through the creation of an excel formula that is displayed below (Figure 4). The formula references two tables, “Responses” and “Key Words”. A description of how the excel formula works is provided next.

The formula was put in the “Count” column of the Table “Key Words”. The formula uses the information provided in columns A (“Participant Number”) and B (“Question Number”) to find a match in table “Responses”. Because the tables were broken down by participant number and question number, there was always a unique match between the two tables. In the example below (Table 9), the formula would look for Participant 1 and Question Number 1 together in the “Responses” table. The formula would then take the text from column C in the “Key Words” table (“Code”) and search through the field of text in column C (“Response”) of the “Responses” table. It is important to note that the formula is not case sensitive, so in this case it captured all occurrences of “Able Bod”. It is also important to note that this formula looks for any word that begins with what is put in the search field (“Code”). In this example, and in the actual analysis, “Able Bod” was used because it was able to capture “Able Body” and “Able Bodied”. However, the formula does have a limitation because of how it looks for the code word. For example, if the word “AB” was entered in the “Code” column to search for all the instances the participant said “AB” in the interview (an acronym/abbreviation for “Able Body” often used by people in adaptive sport), the formula would count such words as “about”, “absent”, “abolish” and more. After finding a match in the “Responses” table for the participant and question number, and searching through the appropriate response, the formula returns a numerical value of the number of times that code word appeared in that particular answer. In the example provided below in table 9, if the participant responded “Able body athletes should not be included” for that

particular question, the formula would return a count of 1. Using a more extensive code list (provided earlier) allowed greater capture of all variations of the same “Key Word” category. For example, “litig” (litigation, litigatory), “law” and “rehab” (Rehab Act) were all categorized under the key word, “law/policy”.

Figure 4

Excel Formula

```
=SUMPRODUCT((LEN(INDEX(Responses!C:C,SUMPRODUCT((Responses!A:A=A3)*(Responses!B:B=B3)*ROW(Responses!C:C)),0))-LEN(SUBSTITUTE((UPPER(INDEX(Responses!C:C,SUMPRODUCT((Responses!A:A=A3)*(Responses!B:B=B3)*ROW(Responses!C:C)),0))),UPPER(C3,"")))/LEN(C3))
```

Note. The figure above displays the excel formula that was used to count the frequency of codes and key words in participant responses.

Table 9

Example of Excel Formula Analysis

Table: “Responses”		
Participant Number	Question Number	Response
1	1	“Able body athletes should not be included”

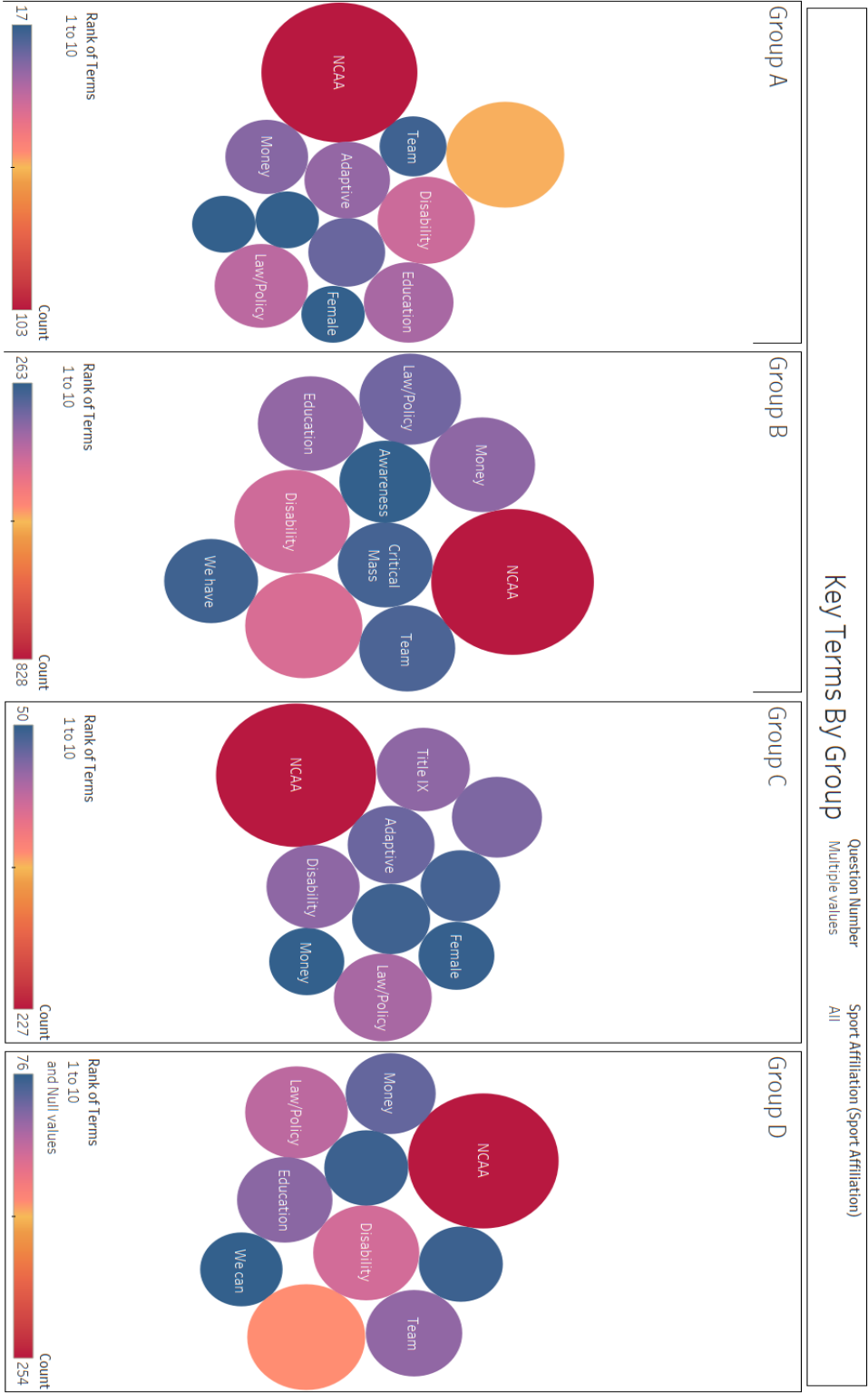
Table: “Key Words”				
Participant Number	Question Number	Code	Key Word	Count
1	1	Able Bod	Able Body	1

Key Word Analysis and Visualizations

After running all the interviews through the excel formula, the data was then imported into Tableau to analyze the frequencies of occurrence of the code words to identify themes that could be examined further. The count of the key words (the codes) were organized in treemaps by stakeholder group (A, B, C, D) (See Figure 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9). A treemap is a type of visualization that assigns geographic space in the visualization area to each key word based on its relative value to other key words. In the visualizations provided below, key words are located in bubbles. The larger the bubble, the more frequent its occurrence. A filter applied to all of the treemaps allowed key word frequencies to be filtered by question because the categories defined as the dependent variables in this study have multiple questions assigned to them. For example, to get the key word frequencies for Dependent Variable 1 (Barriers and Challenges for Collegiate

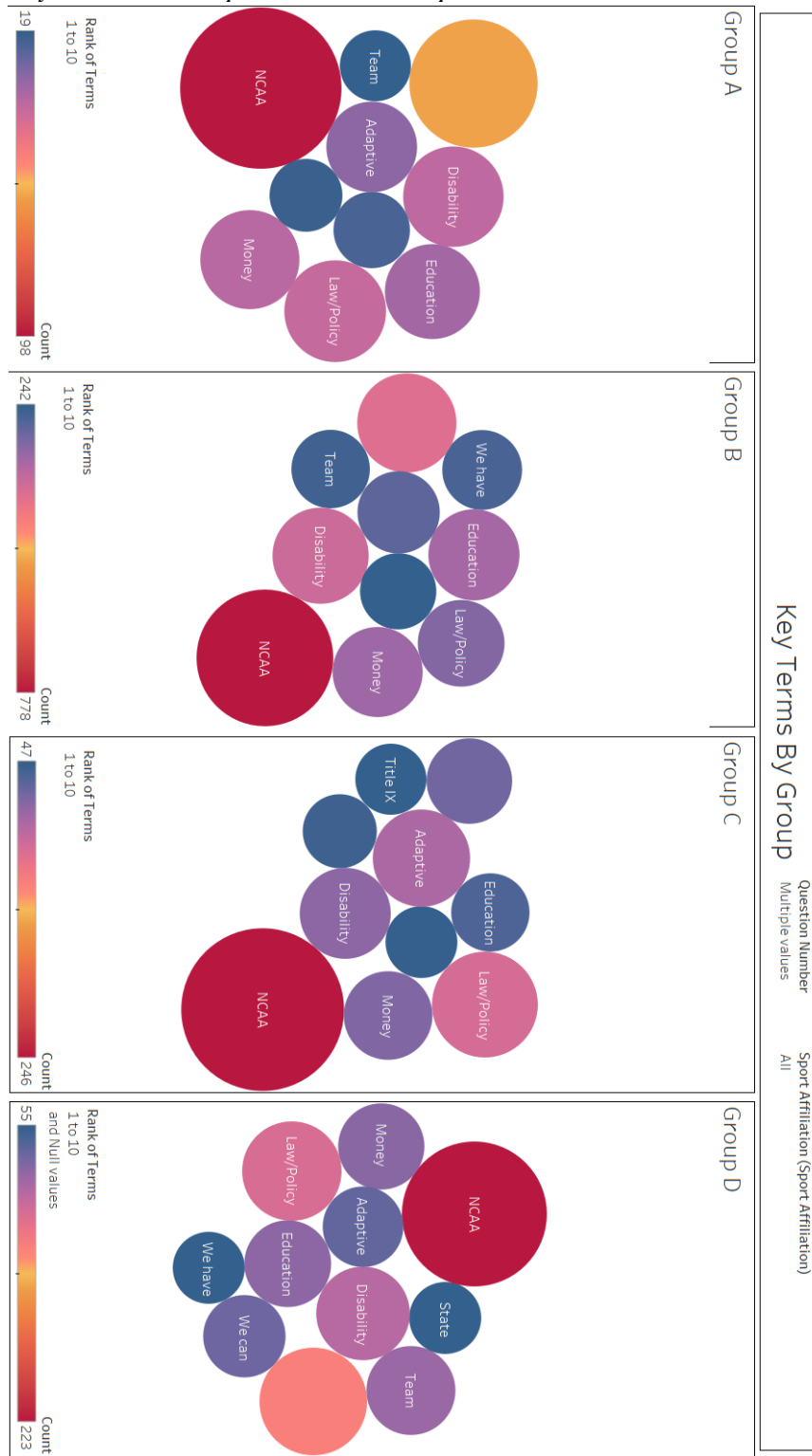
Adaptive Sport), questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 12, 13, and 14 were selected to display in the filter. A filter was also applied that shows the top ten key words for each stakeholder group. If multiple key words have the 10th highest frequency for that particular stakeholder group and question filter, all of them are included in the treemap. The treemaps for each dependent variable are provided below.

Figure 5
Key Word Treemap Dashboard: Dependent Variable 1



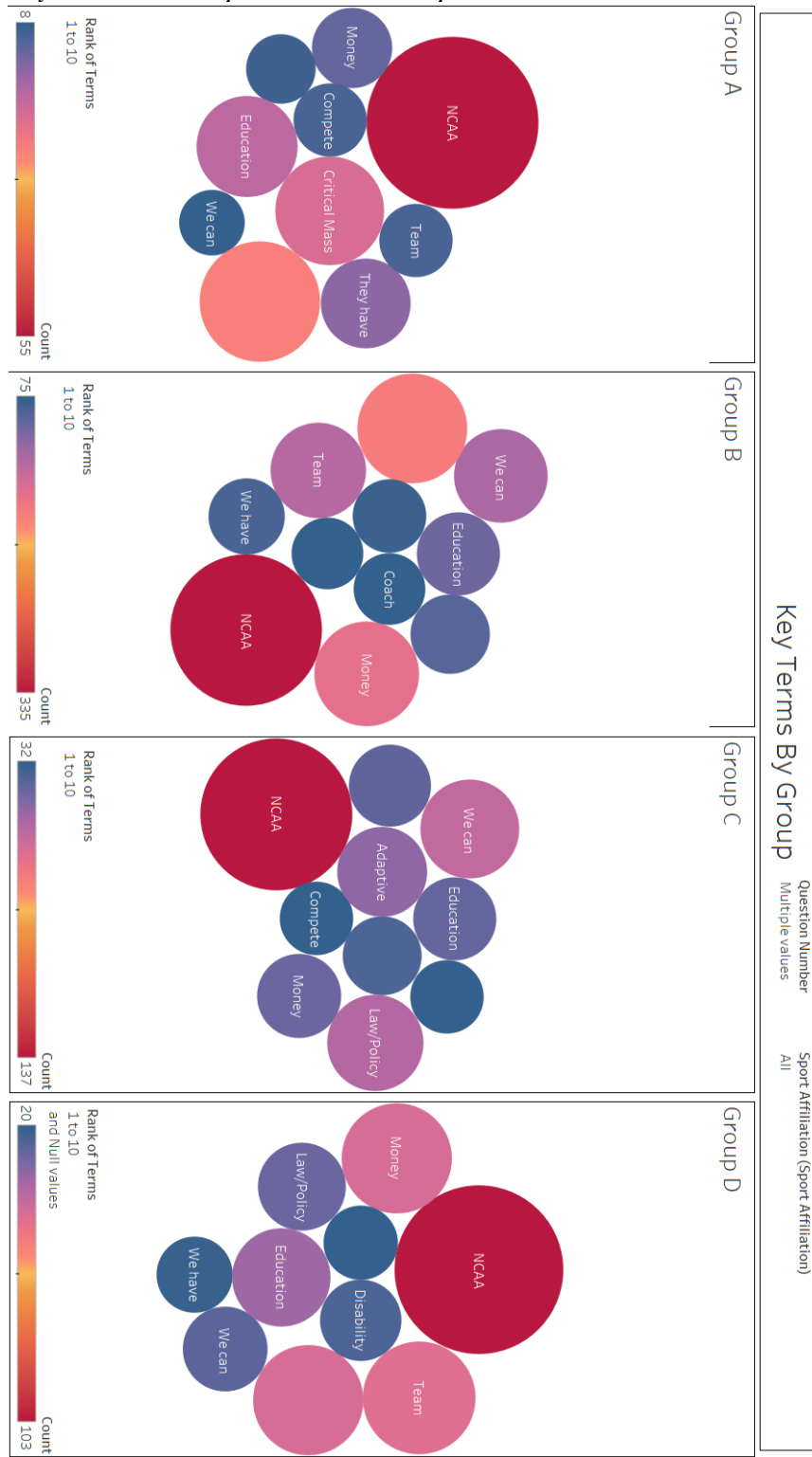
Note. The figure above shows the dashboard used to analyze the key word frequencies for dependent variable 1 (Barriers and Challenges for Collegiate Adaptive Sport). Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 12, 13 and 14 were selected for the question filter.

Figure 6
Key Word Treemap Dashboard: Dependent Variable 2



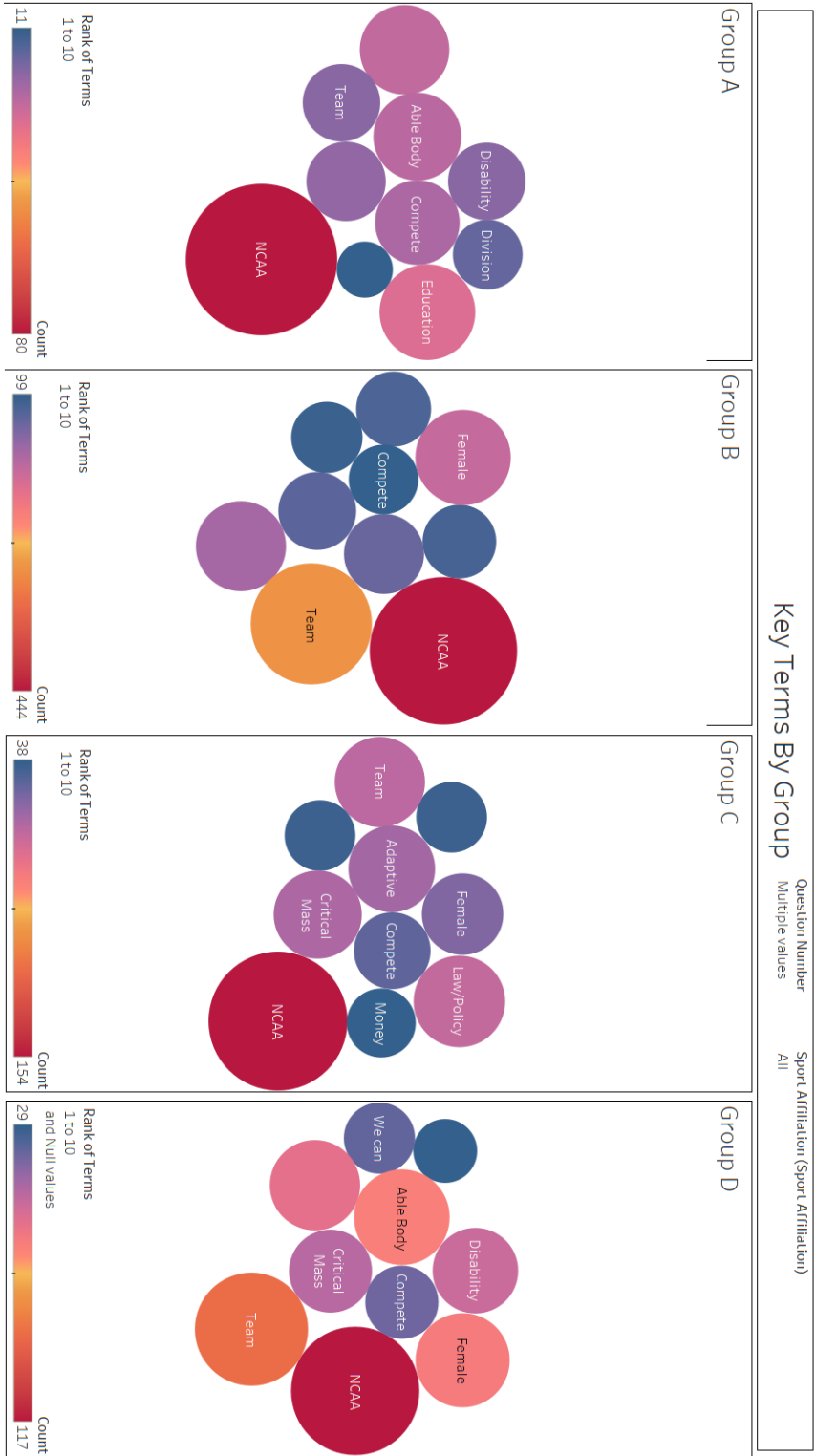
Note. The figure above shows the dashboard used to analyze the key word frequencies for dependent variable 2 (Growth Opportunities for Collegiate Adaptive Sport). Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 12 were selected for the question filter.

Figure 7
Key Word Treemap Dashboard: Dependent Variable 3



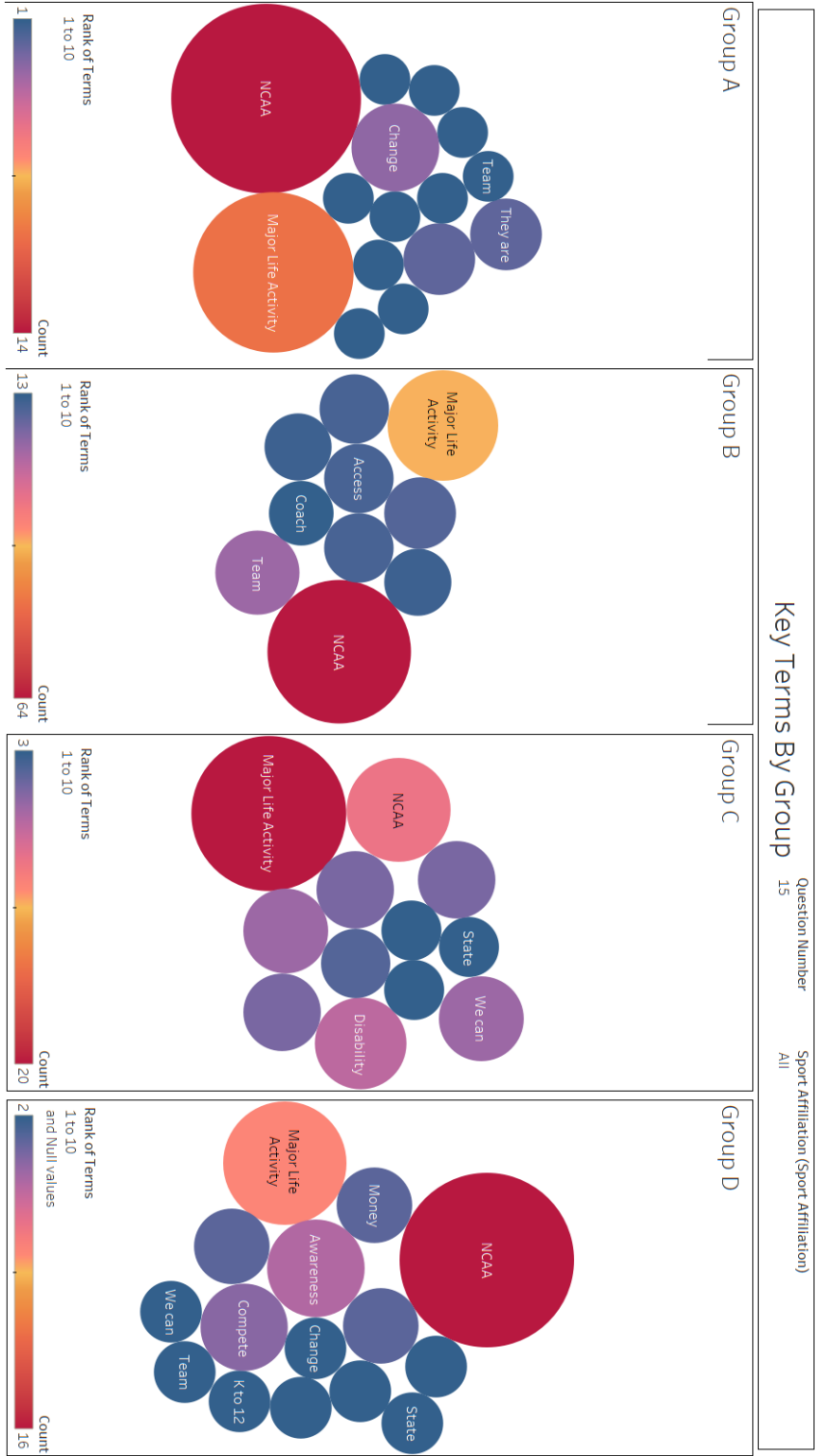
Note. The figure above shows the dashboard used to analyze the key word frequencies for dependent variable 3 (Goals for the Future of Collegiate Adaptive Sport). Questions 6, 7 and 11 were selected for the question filter.

Figure 8
Key Word Treemap Dashboard: Dependent Variable 4



Note. The figure above shows the dashboard used to analyze the key word frequencies for dependent variable 4 (Integration Strategies for Collegiate Adaptive Sport in the NCAA). Questions 8, 9 and 10 were selected for the question filter.

Figure 9
Key Word Treemap Dashboard: Dependent Variable 5



Note. The figure above shows the dashboard used to analyze the key word frequencies for dependent variable 5 (Is Sport a Major Life Activity). Question 15 was selected for the question filter.

The transcribed interviews were then edited to highlight common key words that were shared in the treemaps of each stakeholder group for those particular questions. Then, the transcripts were manually read through to determine thematic answers based on how the highlighted words were used in the transcribed text. For example, in Question 1, participant 23 answered, “to recruit those student athletes in this realm of things, we have to start with those youth leagues and the high school leagues in providing that opportunity to students with a disability”. In the example provided, the words “we have”, “opportunity” and “disability” would be highlighted based on the results from the treemap. One thematic answer that is derived from that statement is “Increase K-12 Participation”. This process was done for each interview. The themes of each answer were stored in excel tables such as the one provided below (Table 10) and counted using a sum function to determine frequency of occurrence. An example is provided below based off of the text sample provided earlier in this section. All responses for the particular question being examined were included in the appropriate table. So, if participant 23 had 10 suggestions for social and cultural changes that could improve participation numbers, then all 10 were listed in the table. By recording the participant number with the response, it allowed for comparison between stakeholder groups, as per the research model.

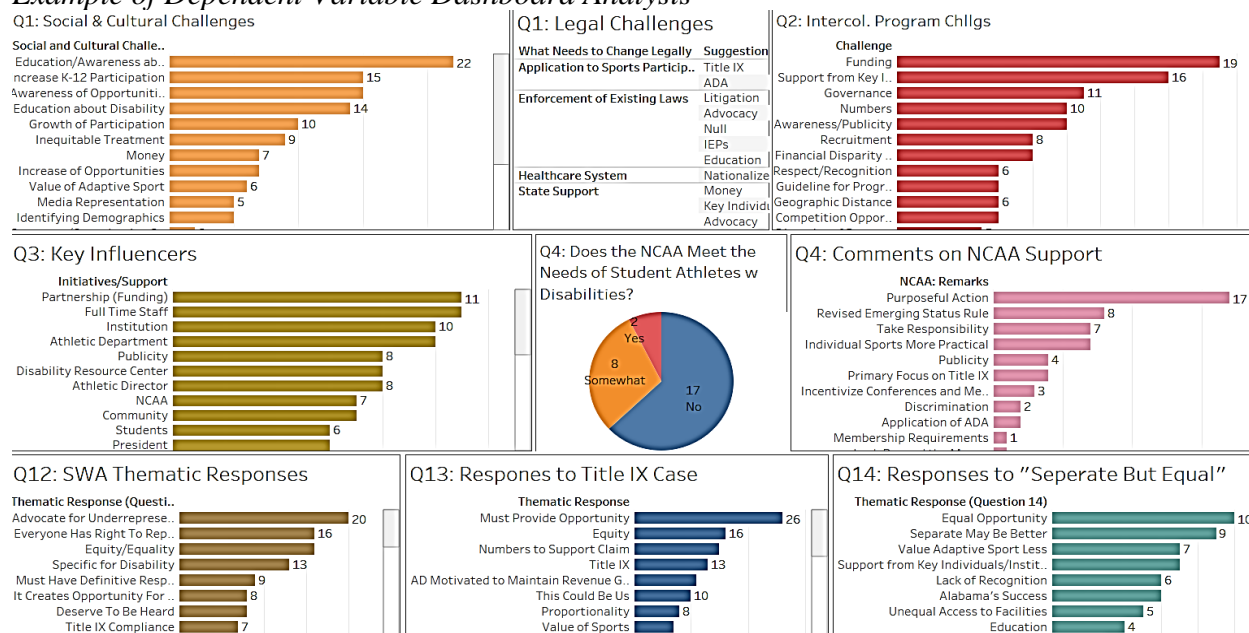
Table 10

Example Table of Thematic Answer

Question 1: Social and Cultural Challenges	
Participant Number	Response
23	Increase K -12 Participation

Once all the questions had their respective tables complete with all responses from the interviews, they were loaded into Tableau. In Tableau, various graphs were used to visualize the data in the most communicative way. Most visualizations were done using text tables, bar graphs, pie charts, treemaps and geographic maps. Once all the visualizations were completed, they were grouped together based on the questions they referred to and used to build a dashboard to analyze the themes of each dependent variable. For example, the dashboard for Dependent Variable 1 is shown below (Figure 10). The other dashboards can be found in the “Results” section. The dashboard was then analyzed at an aggregate level, looking for common themes that appeared based on frequency of occurrence. Then, using a filter, the dashboard was examined per each stakeholder group to analyze the major differences. This process was repeated for each dashboard.

Figure 10
Example of Dependent Variable Dashboard Analysis



Part IV. Results

Participant Demographics

A total of 38 people participated in the study. There were 3, 21, 8 and 6 people from stakeholder groups A through D respectively. The most represented sport affiliation was wheelchair basketball with 13 people, the next was adaptive sport in general (people that worked as program coordinators or directors for adaptive sport programs) with 11 people, the third largest were people who worked in the athletic department with 7 people, wheelchair tennis was the fourth with 4 people and the rest were affiliated with wheelchair rugby and wheelchair track. Participant demographics broken down by stakeholder group and affiliation is illustrated below in figure 11. Participants operated out of 19 different States in the United States. Illinois had the most participants with 6 and Alabama, Arizona, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina had the next highest at 3 people per State. The Big 10 was the most represented conference in this study with a total of 11 participants. Schools from the Big 10 included Michigan State University, Ohio State University, Penn State University, Rutgers University, University of Illinois, University of Michigan and University of Wisconsin. Overall, there were 27 participants from Division 1 schools, 3 participants from Division 2 schools and 2 participants from Division 3 schools. A geographic map displaying participant demographics is illustrated below in figure 12.

Figure 11
Participant Demographics by Stakeholder Group and Sport Affiliation

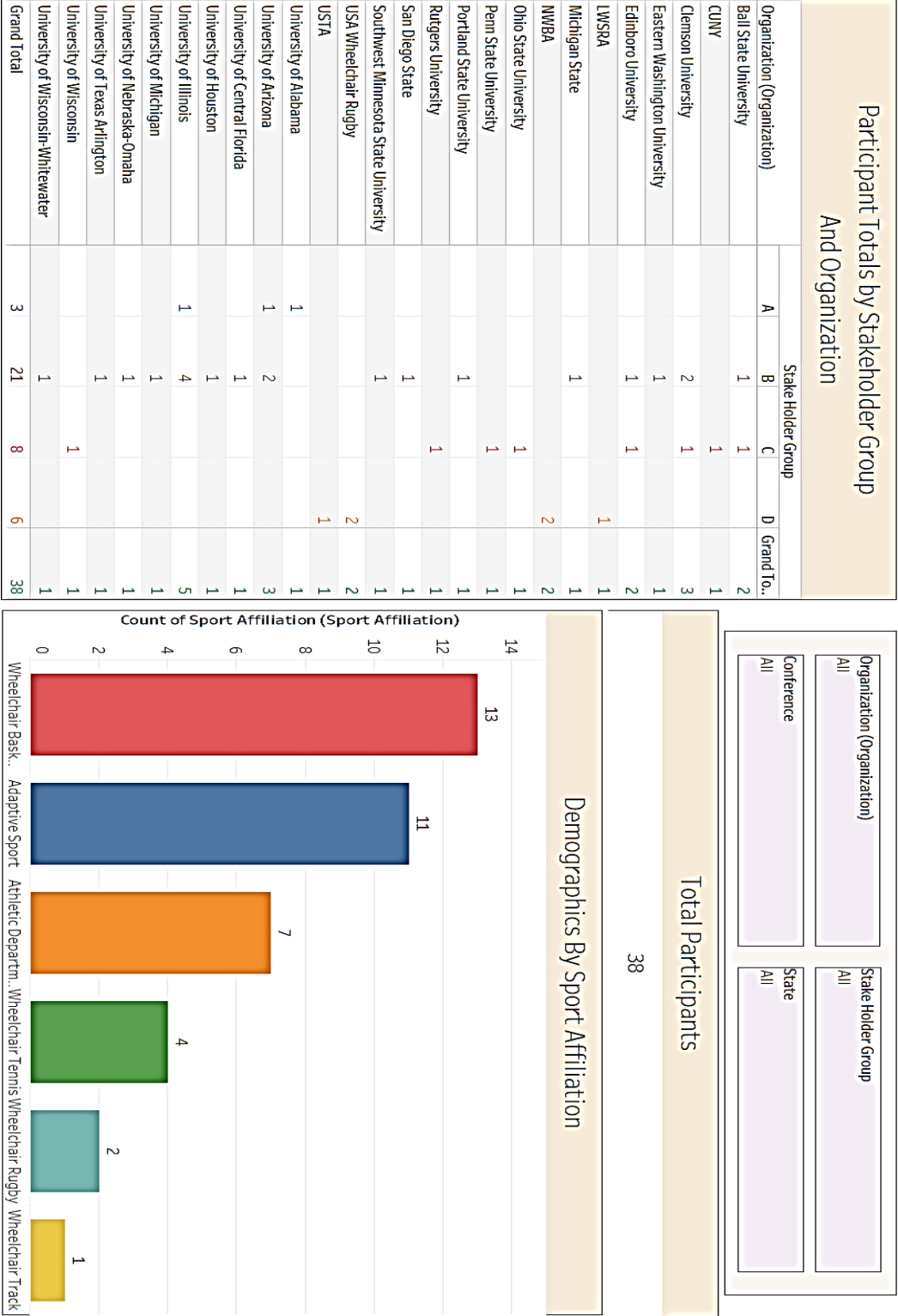
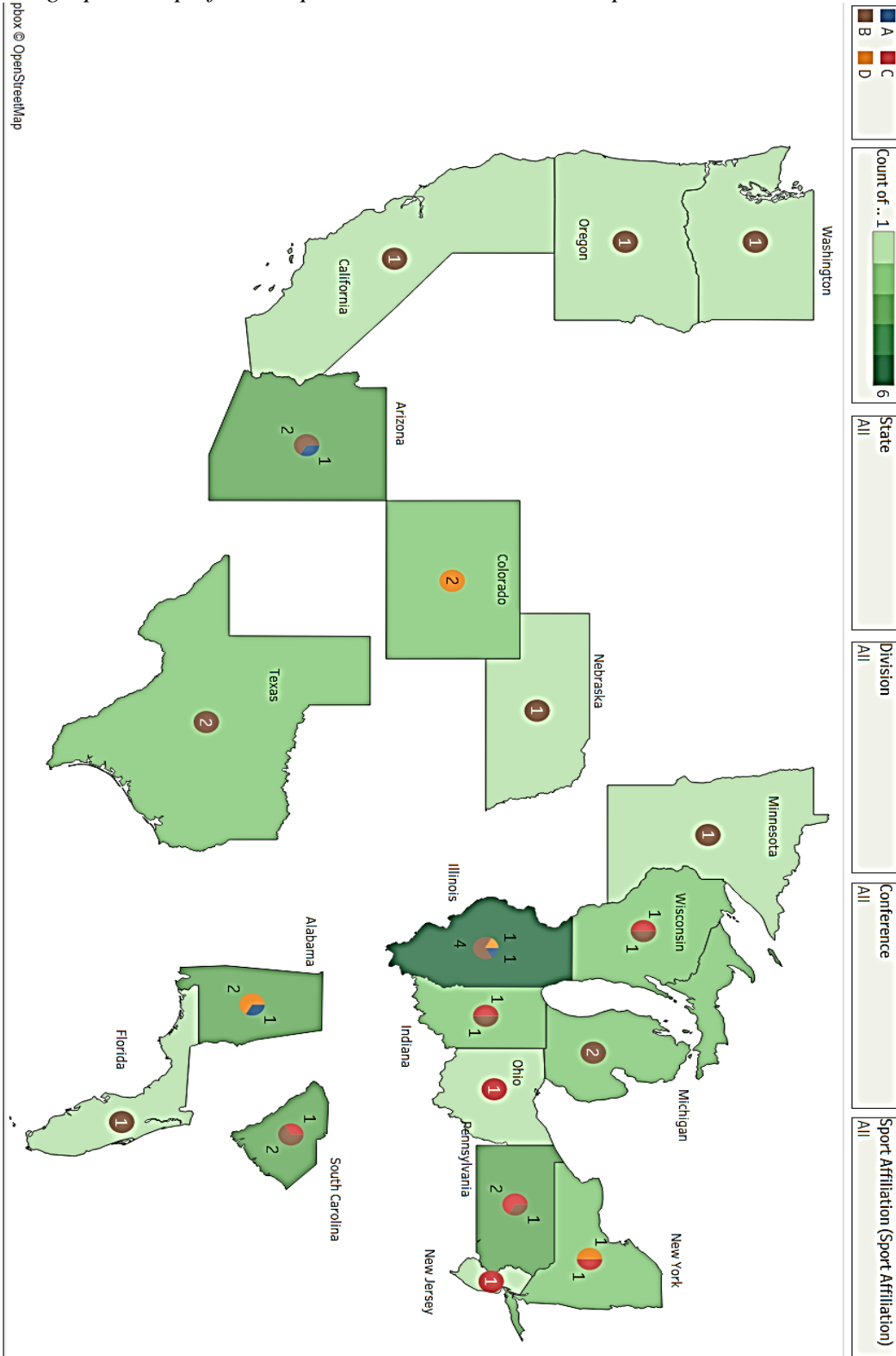


Figure 12
Geographic Map of Participants and Stakeholder Groups

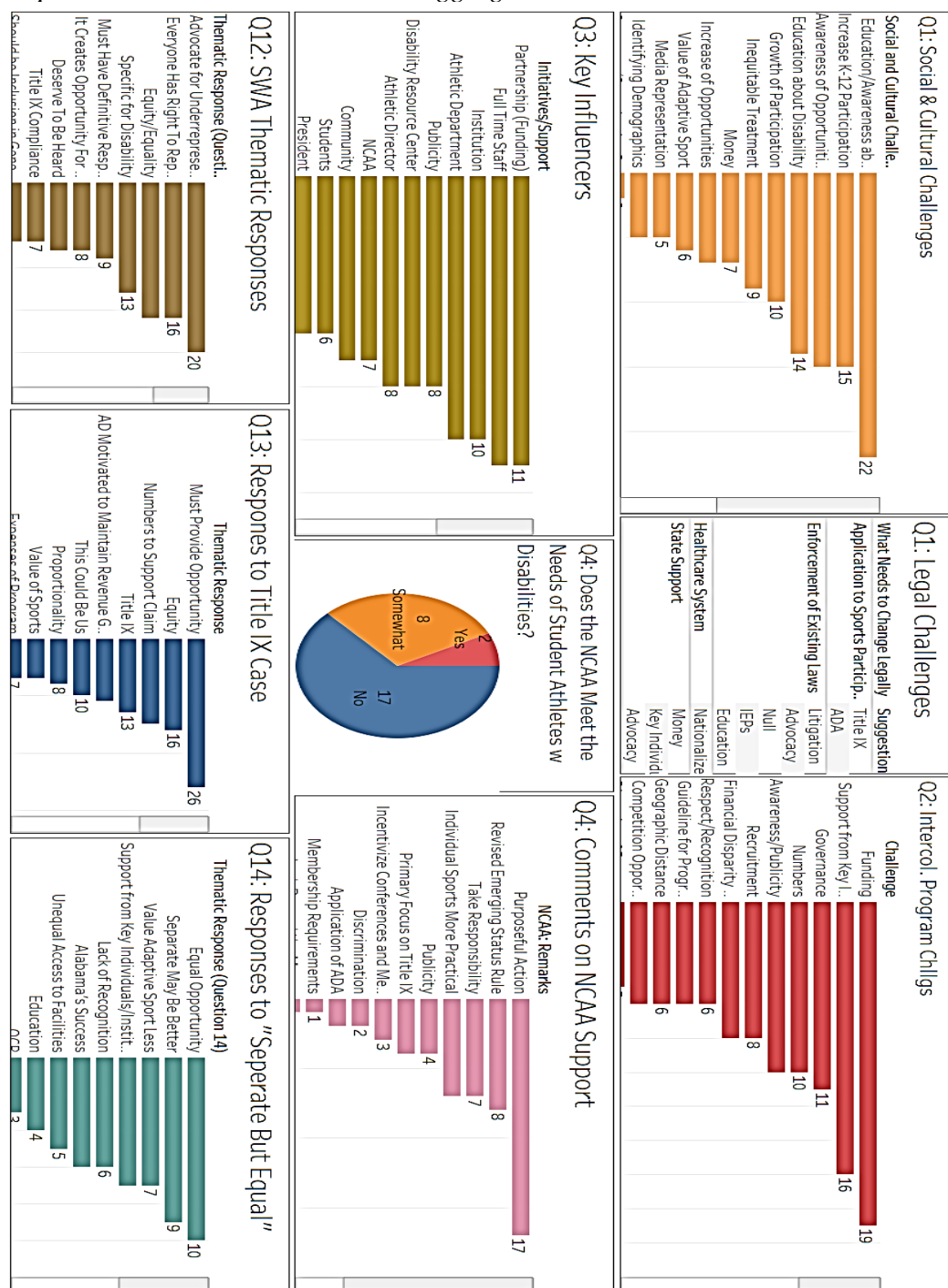


Note. The figure above displays a geographic map of where the participants were from in the United States and the stakeholder group they belonged to.

Dependent Variable 1: Barriers and Challenges for Collegiate Adaptive Sport

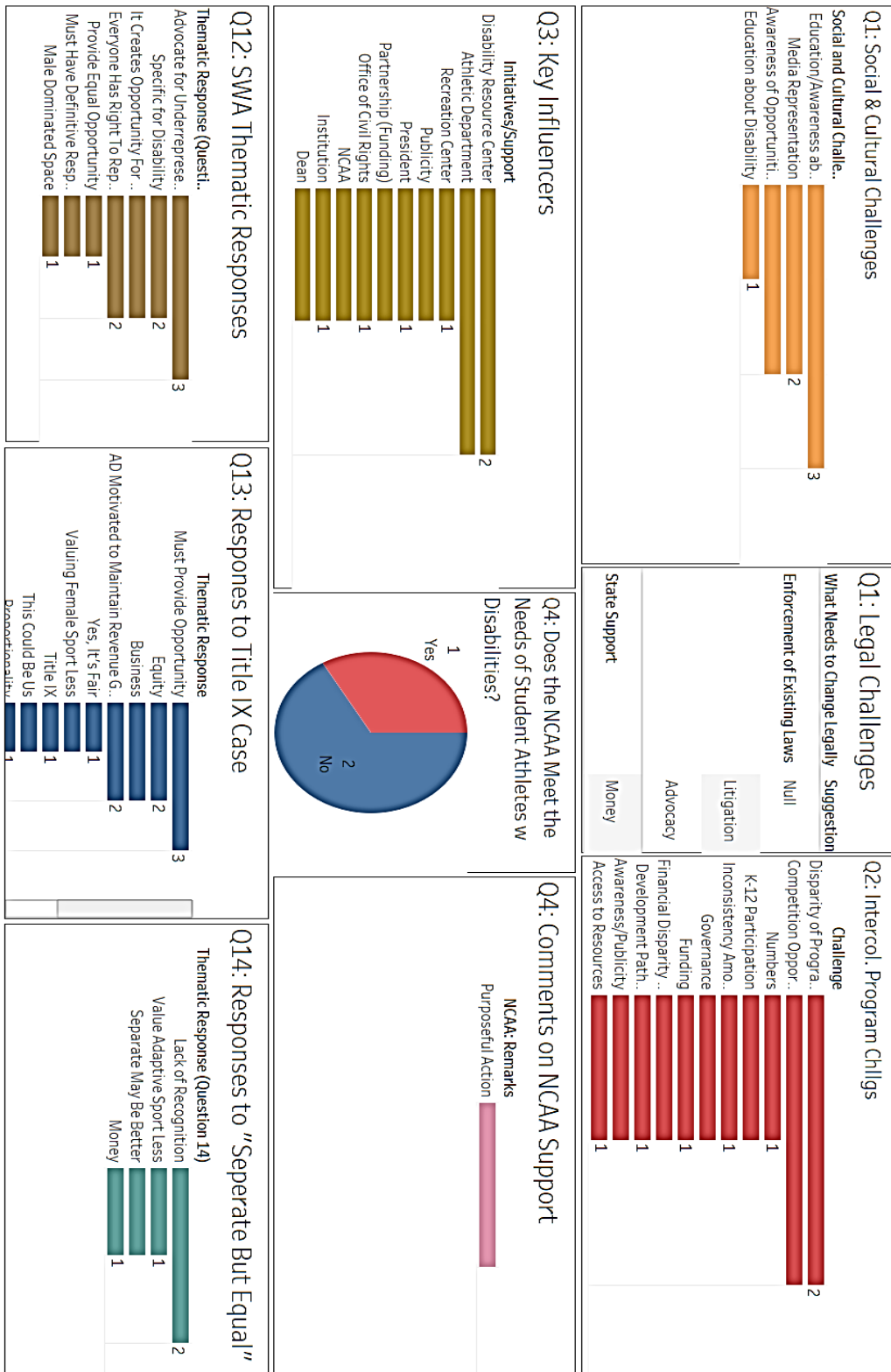
This section has the dashboards that display the results for participant responses to questions that pertained to the first dependent variable, “Barriers and Challenges for Collegiate Adaptive Sports”. Questions that were included in this dependent variable are 1, 2, 3, 4, 12, 13 and 14. The first dashboard (Figure 13) shows the results at the aggregate level (responses from all stakeholder groups). The remaining four dashboards (Figures 14 to 17) show the results for each stakeholder group individually (A through D).

Figure 13
Dependent Variable 1 Dashboard: Aggregate Results



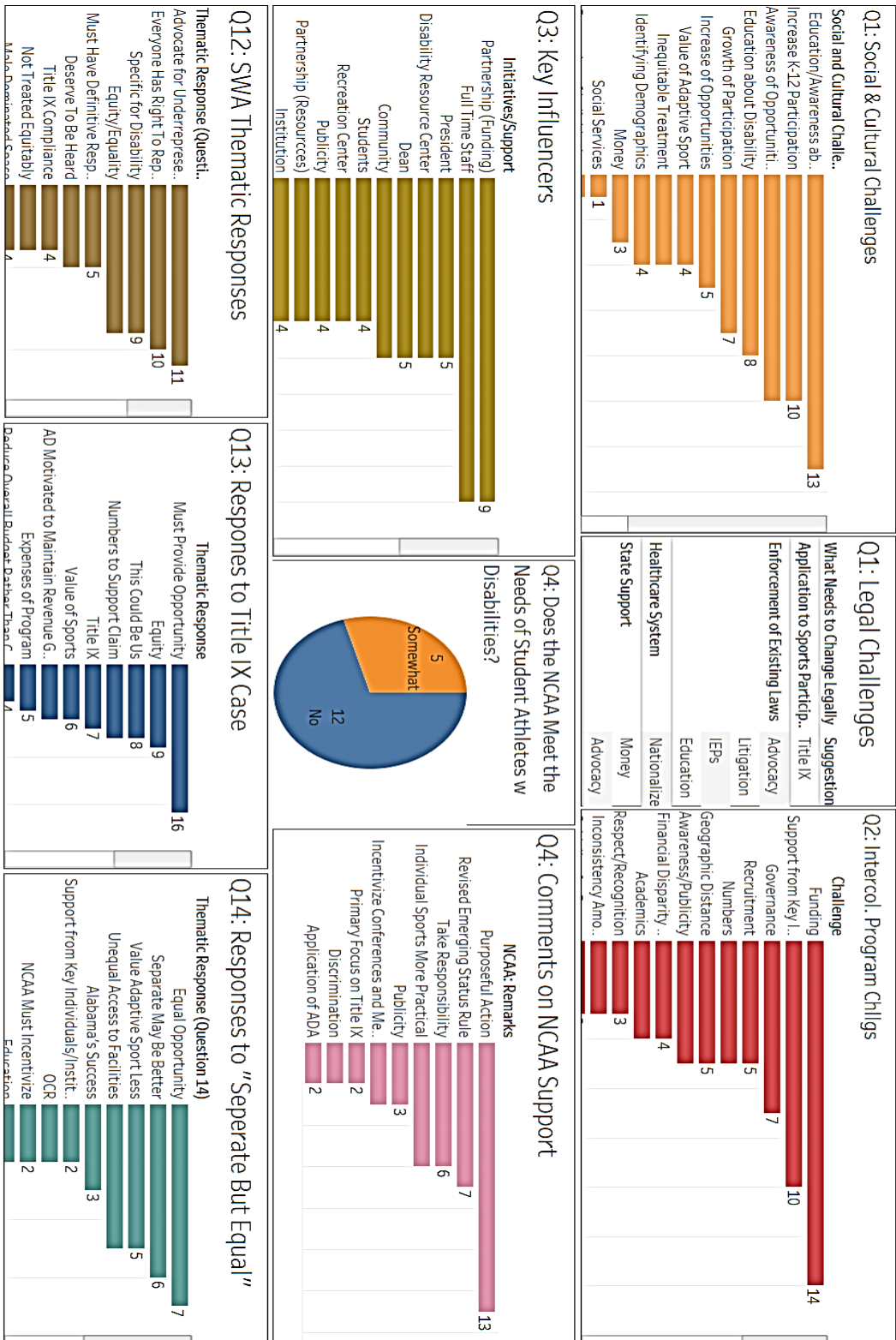
Note. Above are the dashboard results for dependent variable 1 (Barriers and Challenges) for all participants. Titles of the graphs (proceeding left to right and top down) are “Q1: Social & Cultural Challenges”, “Q1: Legal Challenges”, “Q2: Intercollegiate Program Challenges”, “Q3: Key Influencers”, “Q4: Does the NCAA Meet the Needs of Student Athletes with Disabilities?”, “Q4: Comments on NCAA Support”, “Q12: SWA Thematic Responses”, “Q13: Responses to Title IX Case”, “Q14: Responses to Separate But Equal Statement”.

Figure 14
Dependent Variable 1 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group A



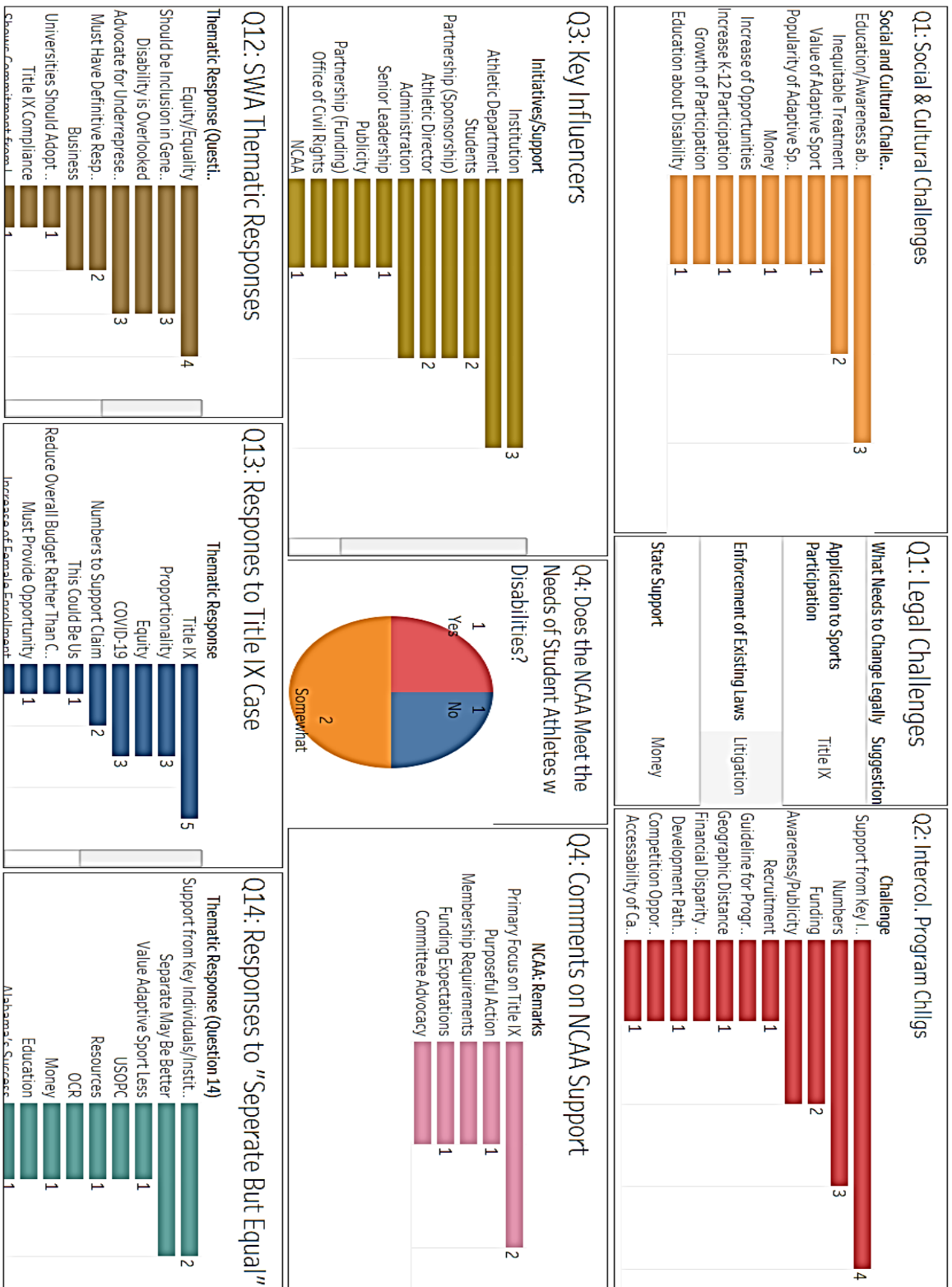
Note. Above are the dashboard results for dependent variable 1 (Barriers and Challenges for Collegiate Adaptive Sport) for stakeholder group A.

Figure 15
Dependent Variable 1 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group B



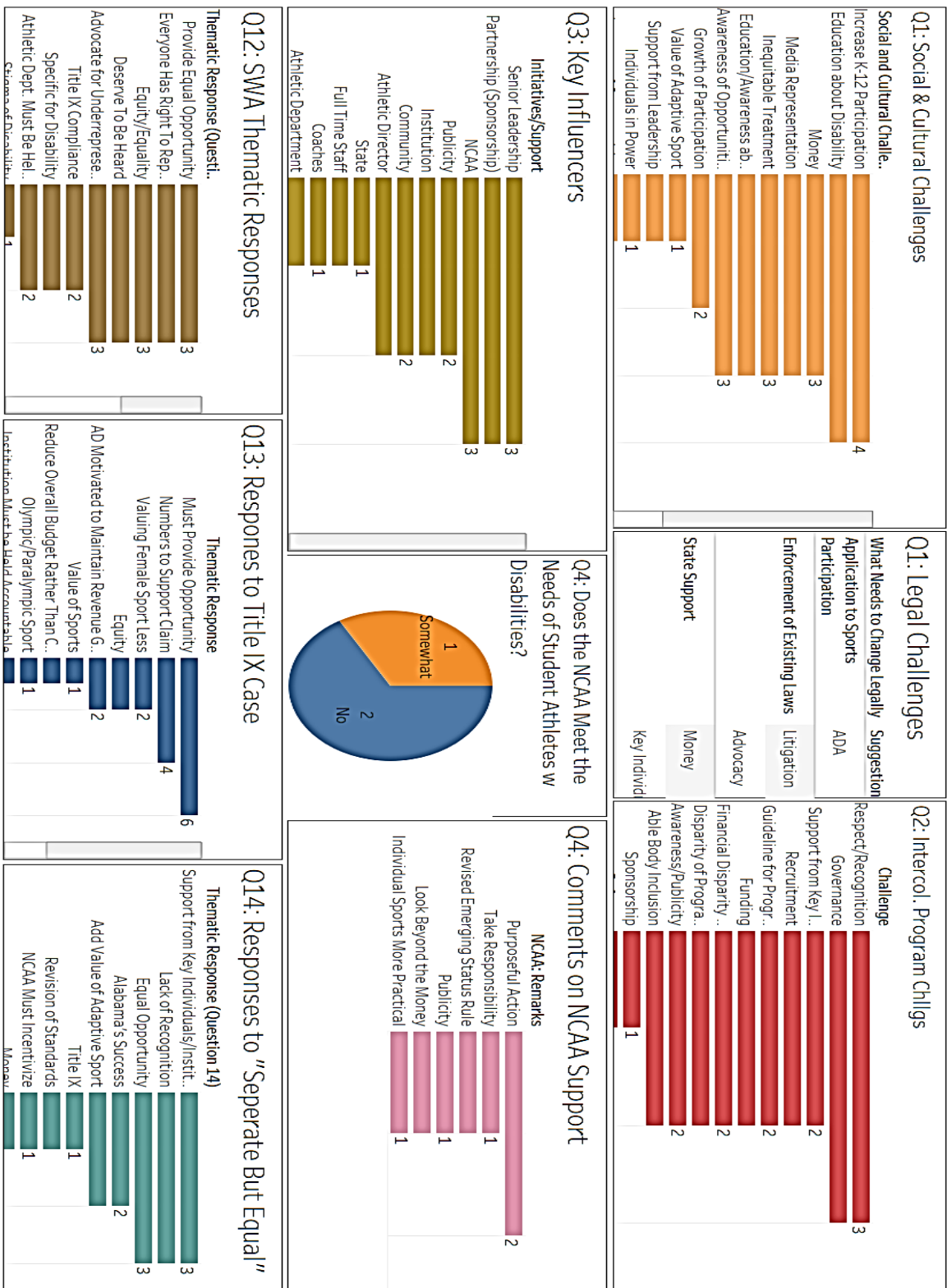
Note. Above are the dashboard results for dependent variable 1 (Barriers and Challenges for Collegiate Adaptive Sport) for stakeholder group B.

Figure 16
Dependent Variable 1 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group C



Note. Above are the dashboard results for dependent variable 1 (Barriers and Challenges for Collegiate Adaptive Sport) for stakeholder group C.

Figure 17
Dependent Variable 1 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group D

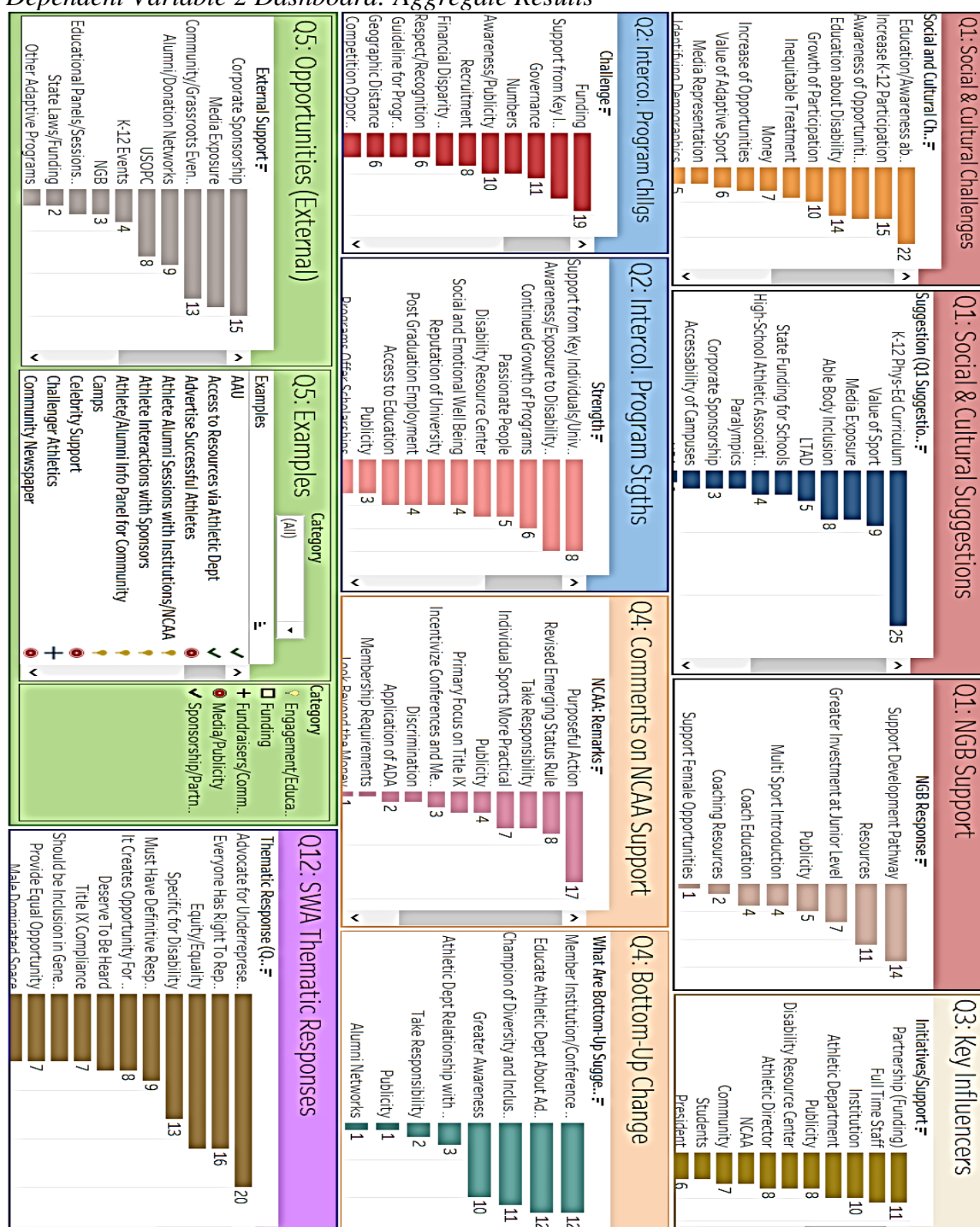


Note. Above are the dashboard results for dependent variable 1 (Barriers and Challenges for Collegiate Adaptive Sport) for stakeholder group D.

Dependent Variable 2: Growth Opportunities for Collegiate Adaptive Sport

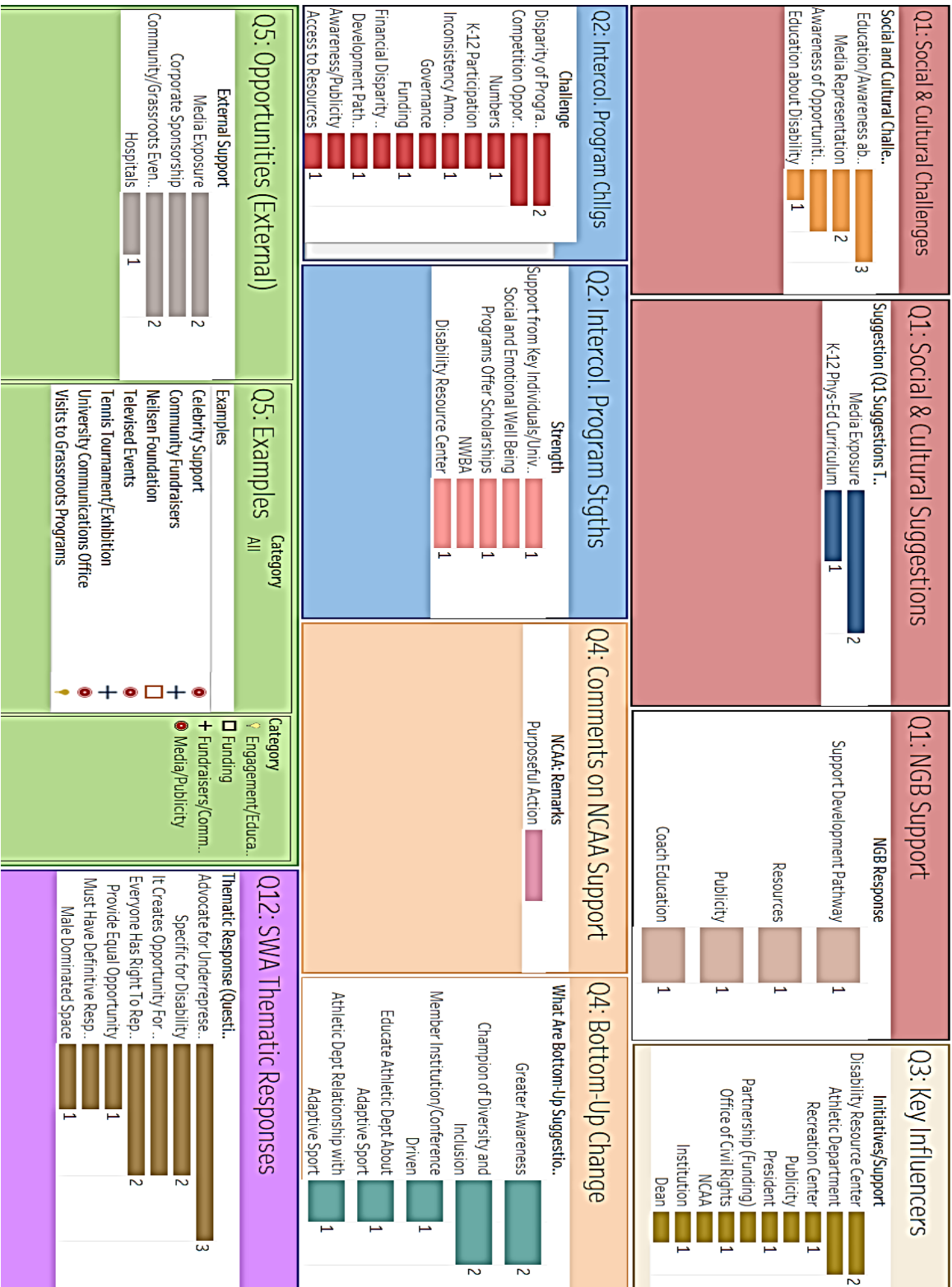
This section has the dashboards that display the results for participant responses to questions that pertained to the second dependent variable, “Growth Opportunities for Collegiate Adaptive Sport”. Questions that were included in this dependent variable are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 12. The first dashboard (Figure 18) shows the results at the aggregate level (responses from all stakeholder groups). The remaining four dashboards (Figures 19 to 22) show the results for each stakeholder group individually (A through D).

Figure 18
Dependent Variable 2 Dashboard: Aggregate Results



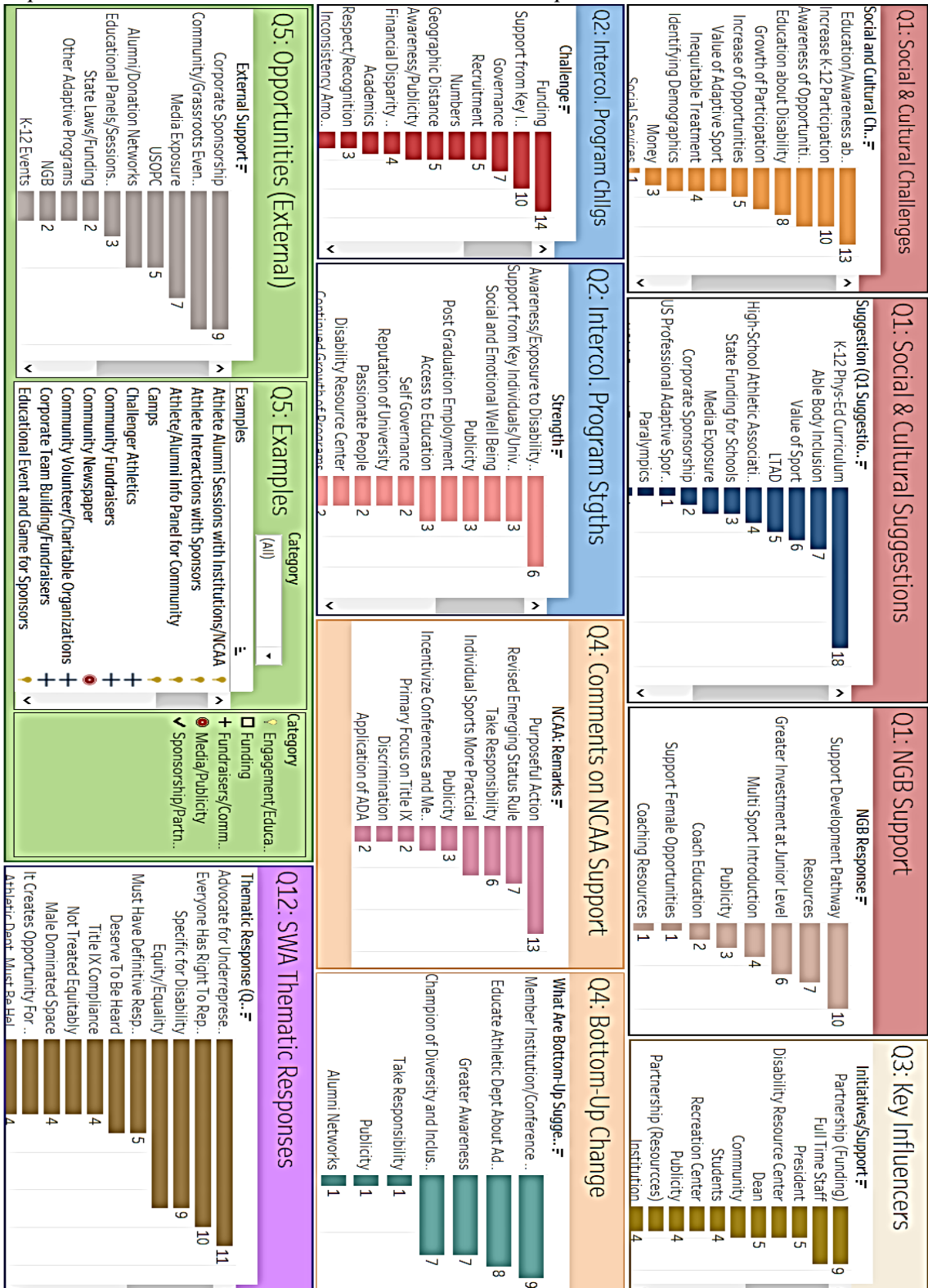
Note. Above are the dashboard results for dependent variable 2 (Growth Opportunities for Collegiate Adaptive Sport) for all participants. Titles of the graphs (proceeding left to right and top down) are “Q1: Social and Cultural Challenges”, “Q1: Social and Cultural Suggestions”, “Q1: NGB Support”, “Q3: Key Influencers”, “Q2: Intercollegiate Program Challenges”, “Q2: Intercollegiate Program Strengths”, “Q4: Comments on NCAA Support”, “Q4: Bottom-Up Change”, “Q5: Opportunities and Examples”, “Q12: SWA Thematic Responses”.

Figure 19
Dependent Variable 2 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group A



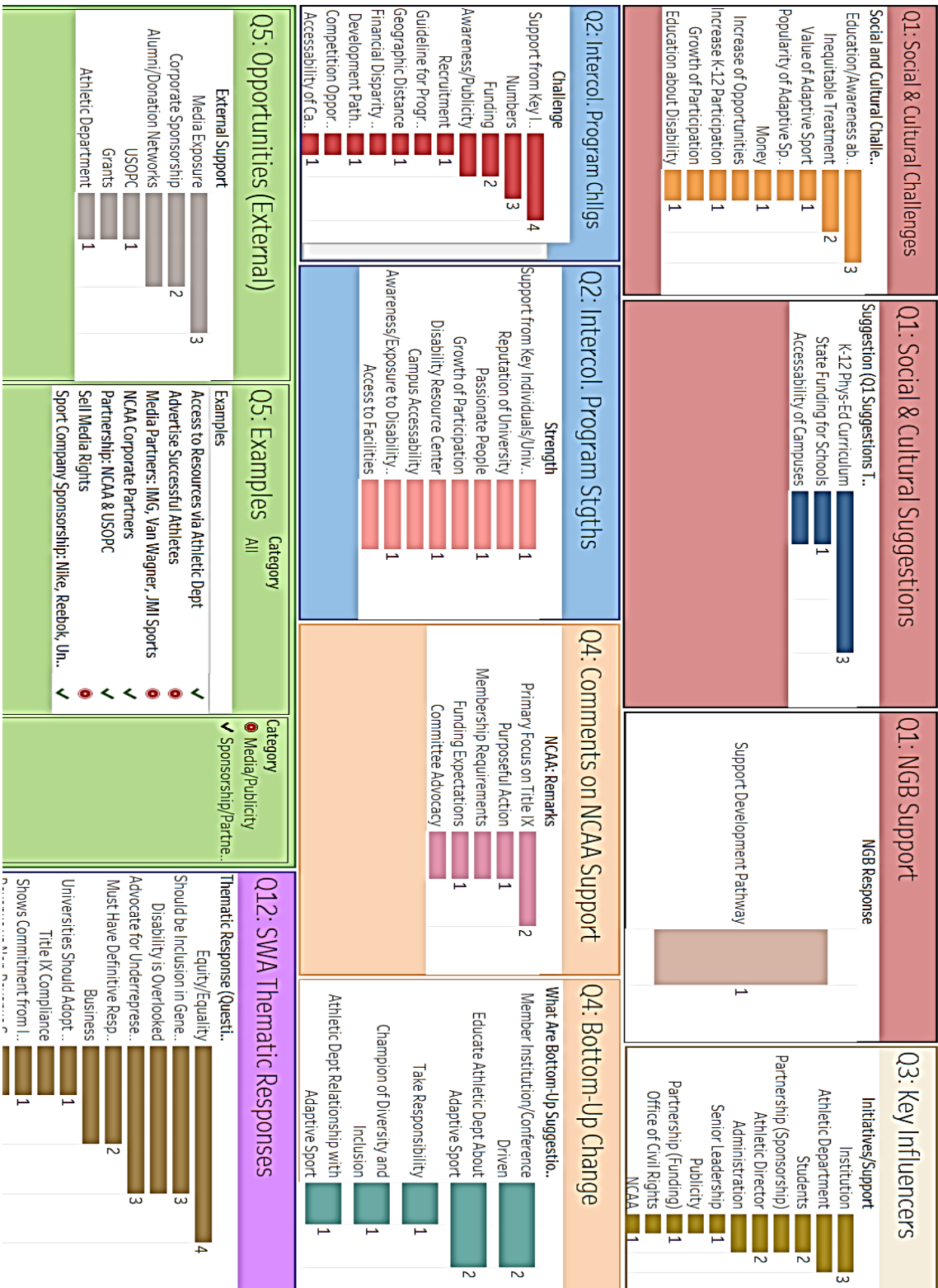
Note. Above are the dashboard results for dependent variable 2 (Growth Opportunities for Collegiate Adaptive Sport) for stakeholder group A.

Figure 20
Dependent Variable 2 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group B



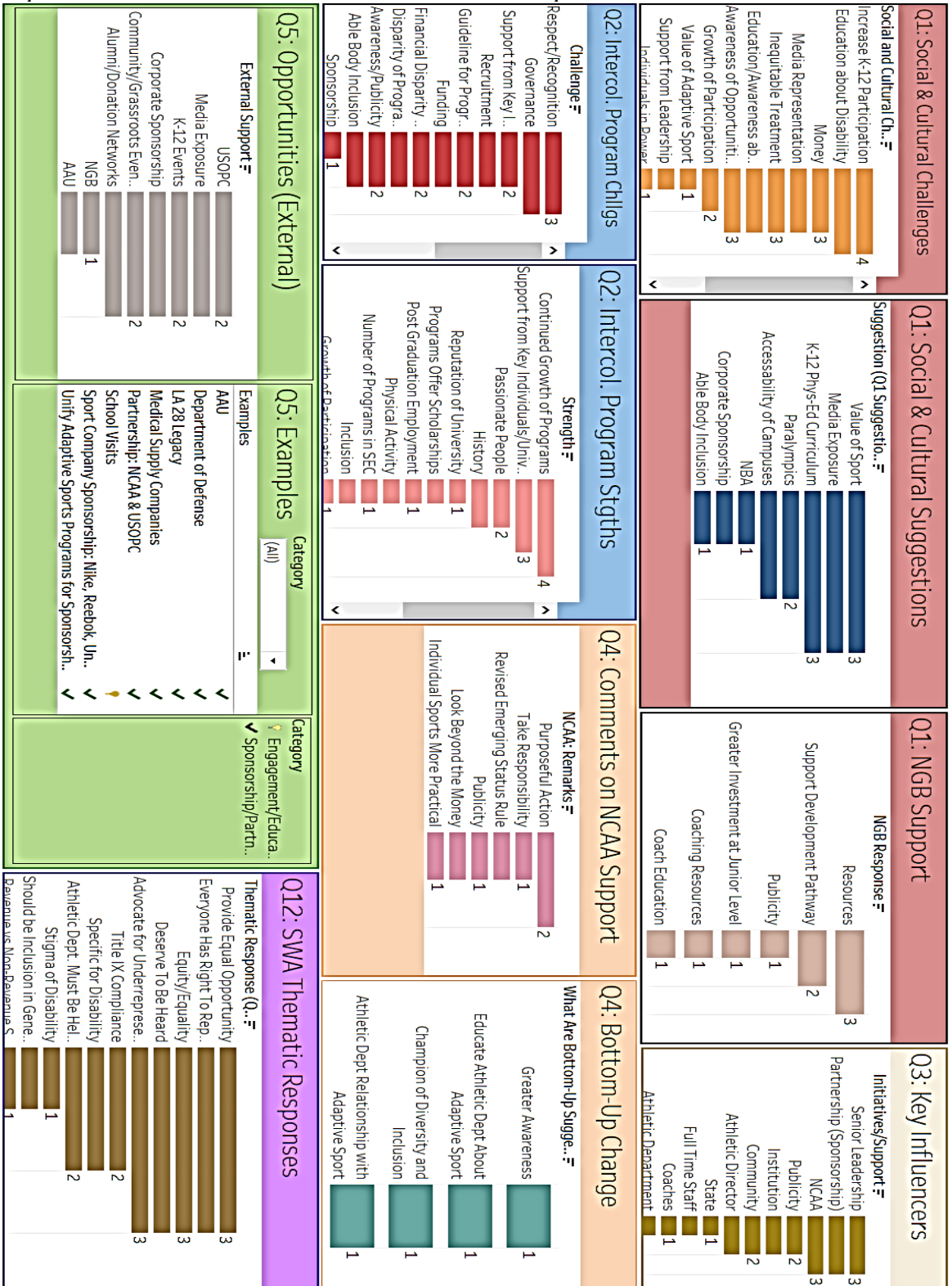
Note. Above are the dashboard results for dependent variable 2 (Growth Opportunities for Collegiate Adaptive Sport) for stakeholder group B.

Figure 21
Dependent Variable 3 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group C



Note. Above are the dashboard results for dependent variable 2 (Growth Opportunities for Collegiate Adaptive Sport) for stakeholder group C.

Figure 22
Dependent Variable 2 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group D

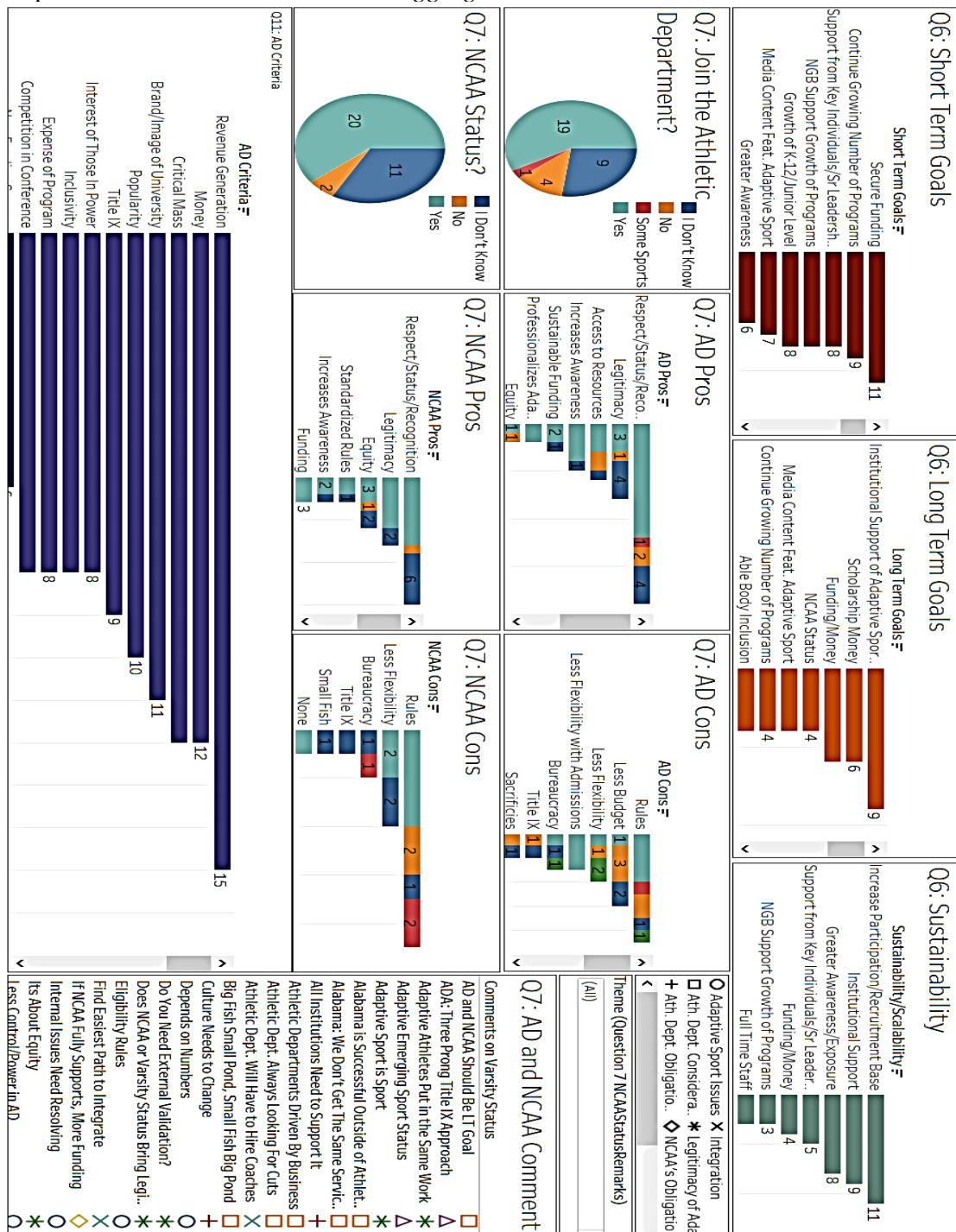


Note. Above are the dashboard results for dependent variable 2 (Growth Opportunities for Collegiate Adaptive Sport) for stakeholder group D.

Dependent Variable 3: Goals for the Future of Collegiate Adaptive Sports

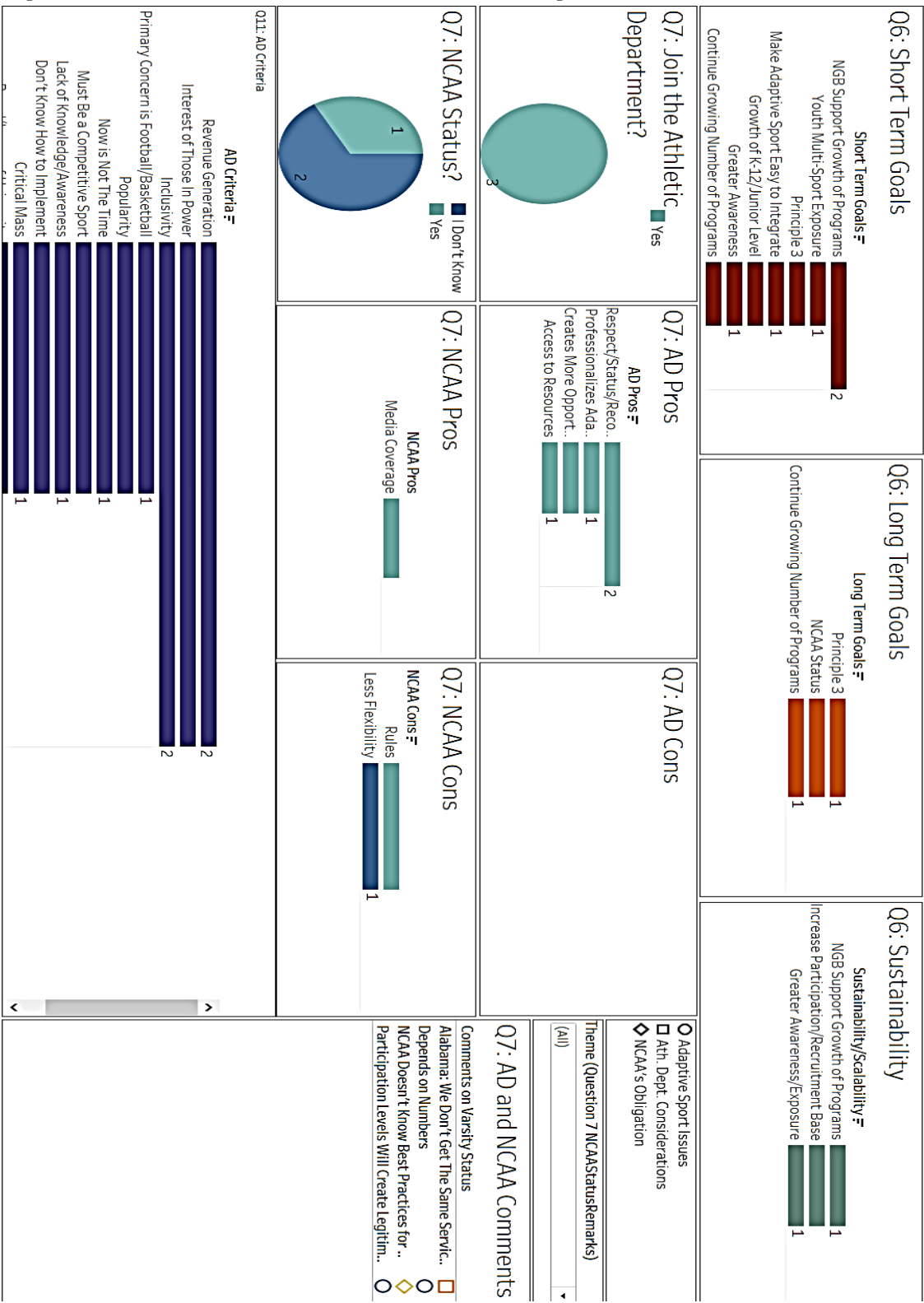
This section has the dashboards that display the results for participant responses to questions that pertained to the third dependent variable, “Goals for the Future of Collegiate Adaptive Sports”. Questions that were included in this dependent variable are 6, 7 and 11. The first dashboard (Figure 23) shows the results at the aggregate level (responses from all stakeholder groups). The remaining four dashboards (Figures 24 to 27) show the results for each stakeholder group individually (A through D).

Figure 23
Dependent Variable 3 Dashboard: Aggregate Results



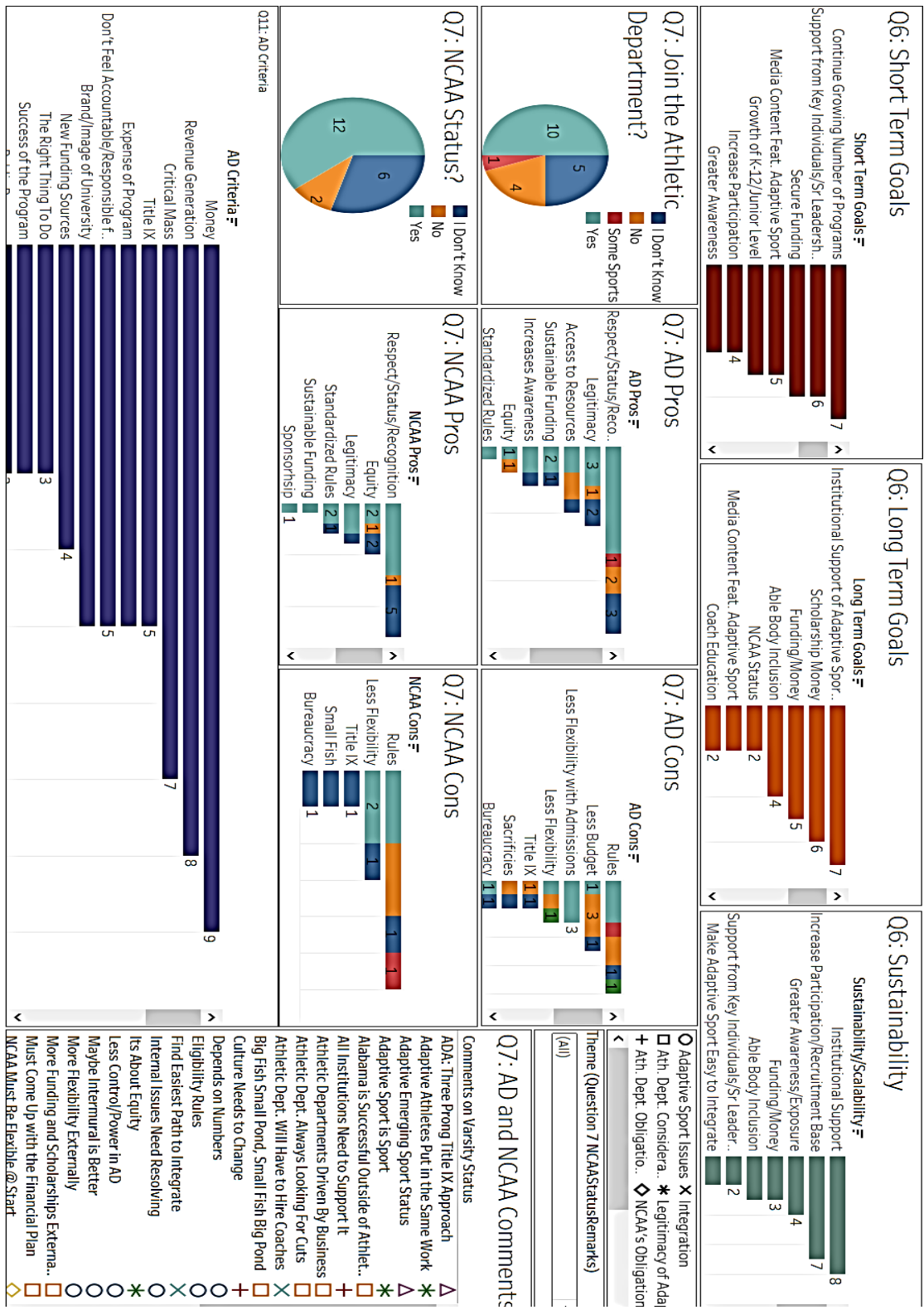
Note. Above are the dashboard results for dependent variable 3 (Goals for the Future of Collegiate Adaptive Sport) for all participants. Titles of the graphs (proceeding left to right and top down) are “Q6: Short Term Goals, Long Term Goals and Sustainability”, “Q7: Join the Athletic Department?”, “Q7: Athletic Department Pros”, “Q7: Athletic Department Cons”, “Q7: NCAA Status?”, “Q7: NCAA Pros”, “Q7: NCAA Cons”, “Q7: Athletic Department and NCAA Comments”, “Q11: Athletic Department Criteria”.

Figure 24
Dependent Variable 3 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group A



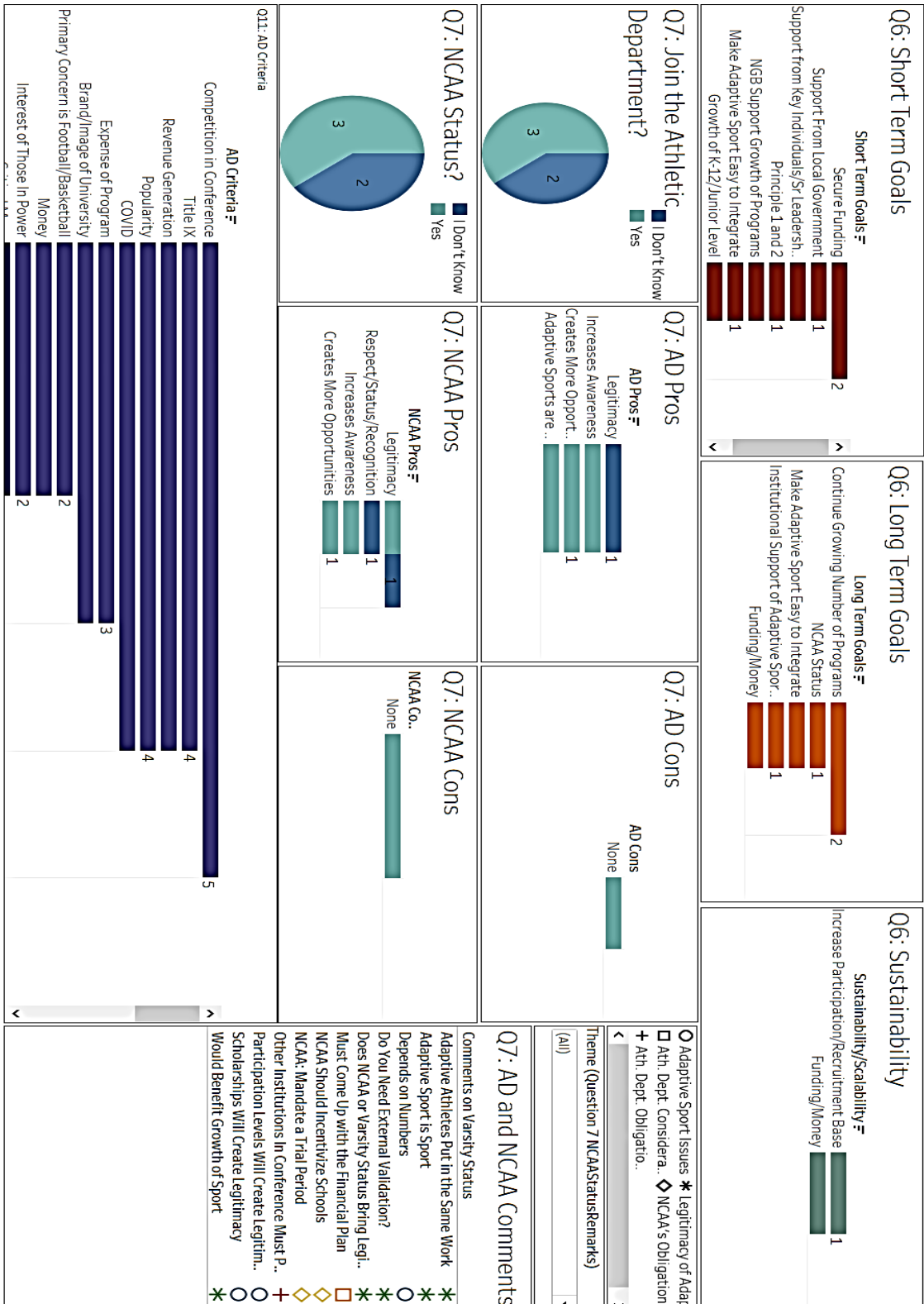
Note. Above are the dashboard results for dependent variable 3 (Goals for the Future of Collegiate Adaptive Sport) for stakeholder group A.

Figure 25
Dependent Variable 3 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group B



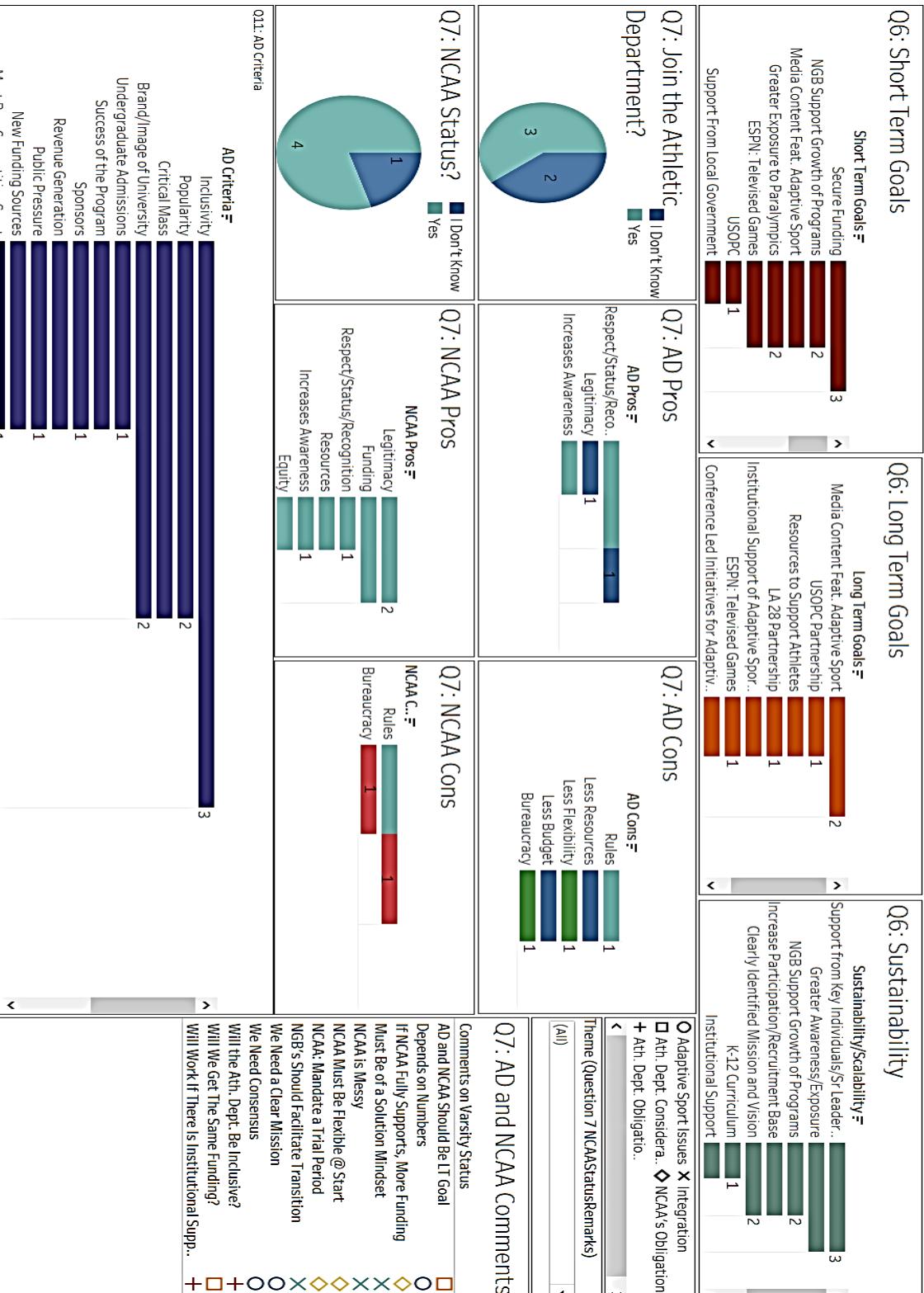
Note. Above are the dashboard results for dependent variable 3 (Goals for the Future of Collegiate Adaptive Sport) for stakeholder group B.

Figure 26
Dependent Variable 3 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group C



Note. Above are the dashboard results for dependent variable 3 (Goals for the Future of Collegiate Adaptive Sport) for stakeholder group C.

Figure 27
Dependent Variable 3 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group D

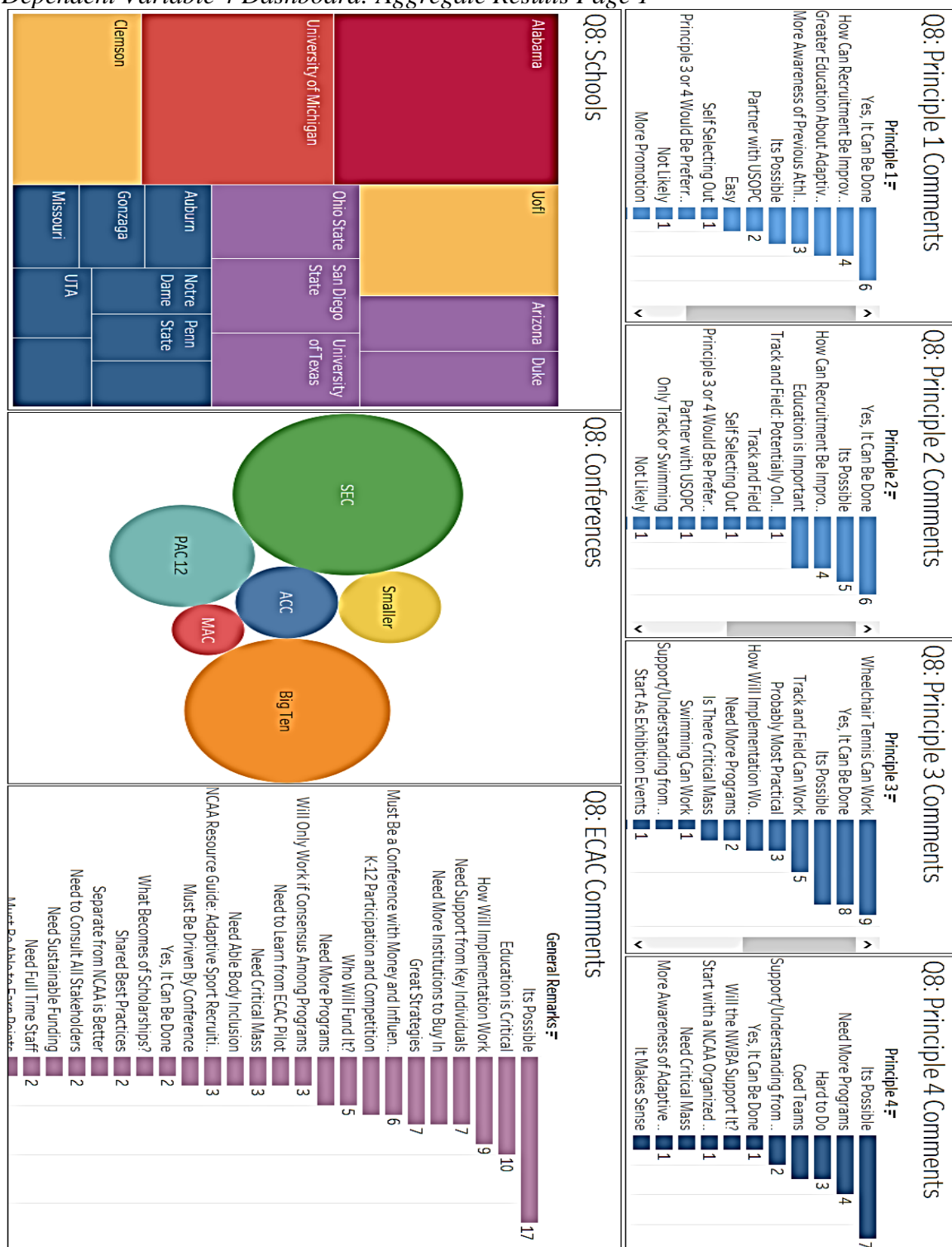


Note. Above are the dashboard results for dependent variable 3 (Goals for the Future of Collegiate Adaptive Sport) for stakeholder group D.

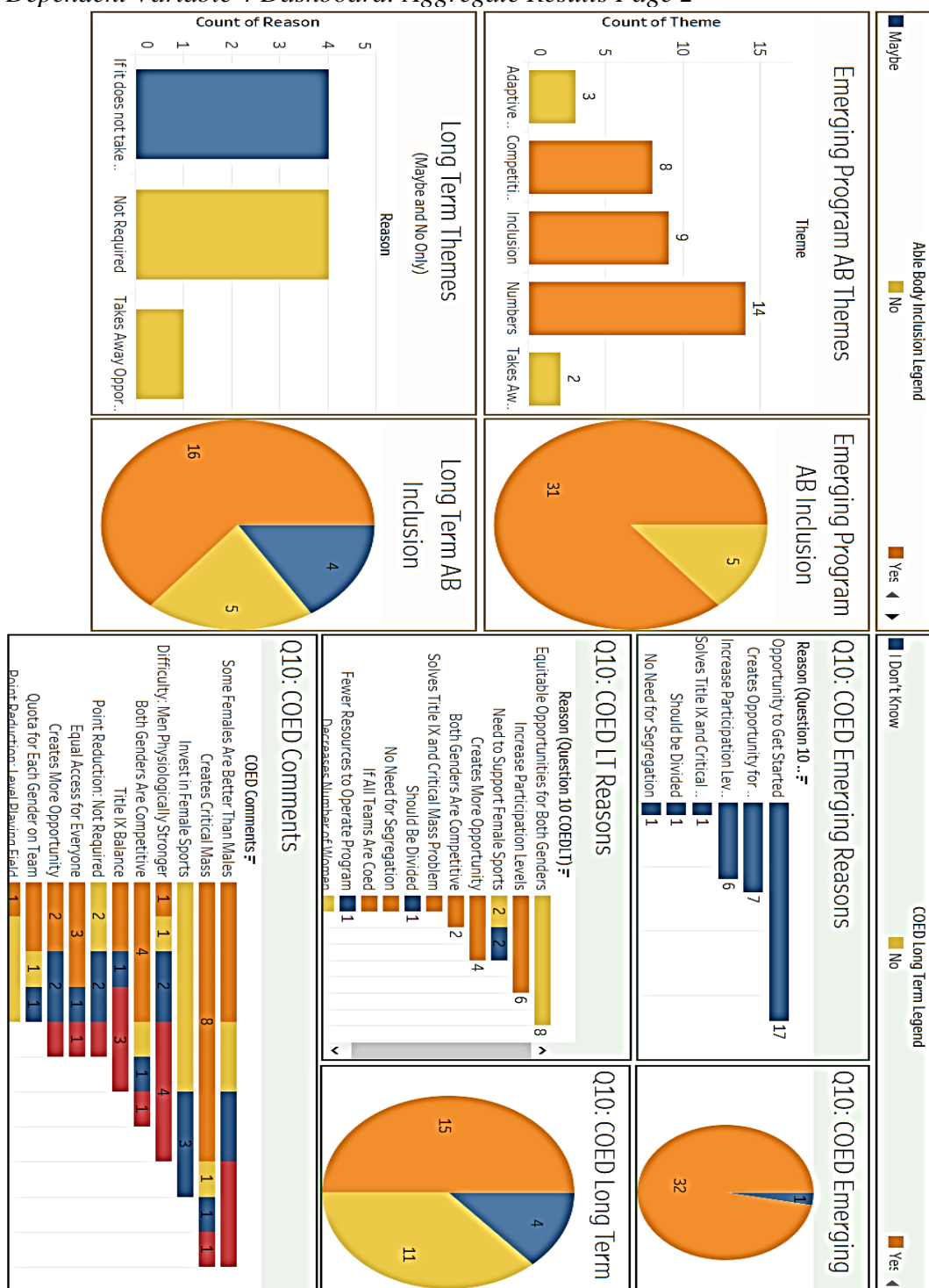
Dependent Variable 4: Integration Strategies for Collegiate Adaptive Sport in the NCAA

This section has the dashboards that display the results for participant responses to questions that pertained to the fourth dependent variable, “Integration Strategies for Collegiate Adaptive Sport in the NCAA”. Questions that were included in this dependent variable are 8, 9 and 10. The first two dashboards (Figure 28 and 29) shows the results at the aggregate level (responses from all stakeholder groups). The remaining eight dashboards (Figures 30 to 37) show the results for each stakeholder group individually (A through D).

Figure 28
Dependent Variable 4 Dashboard: Aggregate Results Page 1

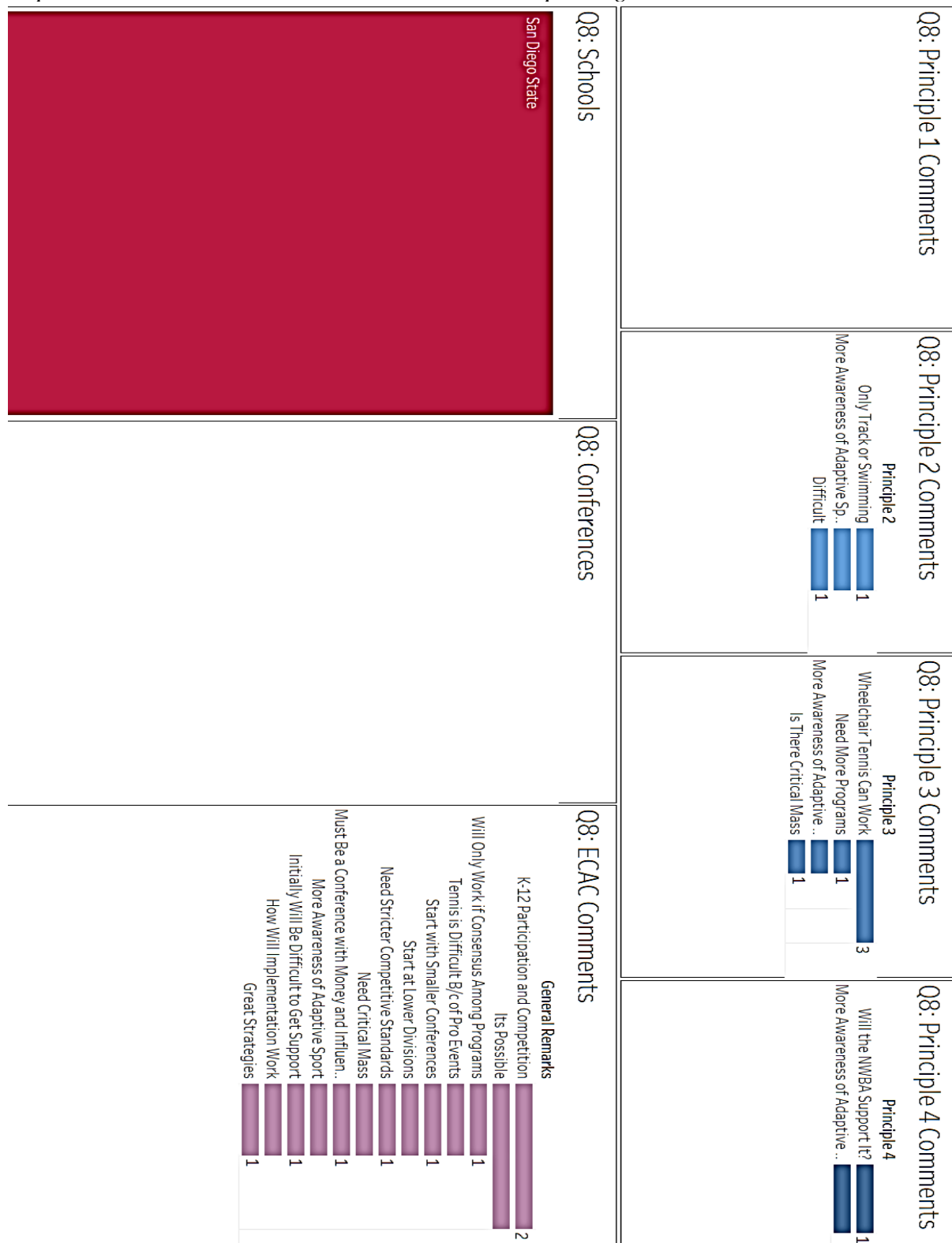


Note. The first of two pages with dashboard results for dependent variable 4 (Integration Strategies) for all participants. Titles of the graphs (proceeding left to right and top down) are “Q8: Principle 1 Comments”, “Q8: Principle 2 Comments”, “Q8: Principle 3 Comments”, “Q8: Principle 4 Comments”, “Q8: Schools”, “Q8 Conferences”, “Q8: ECAC Comments”.

Figure 29*Dependent Variable 4 Dashboard: Aggregate Results Page 2*

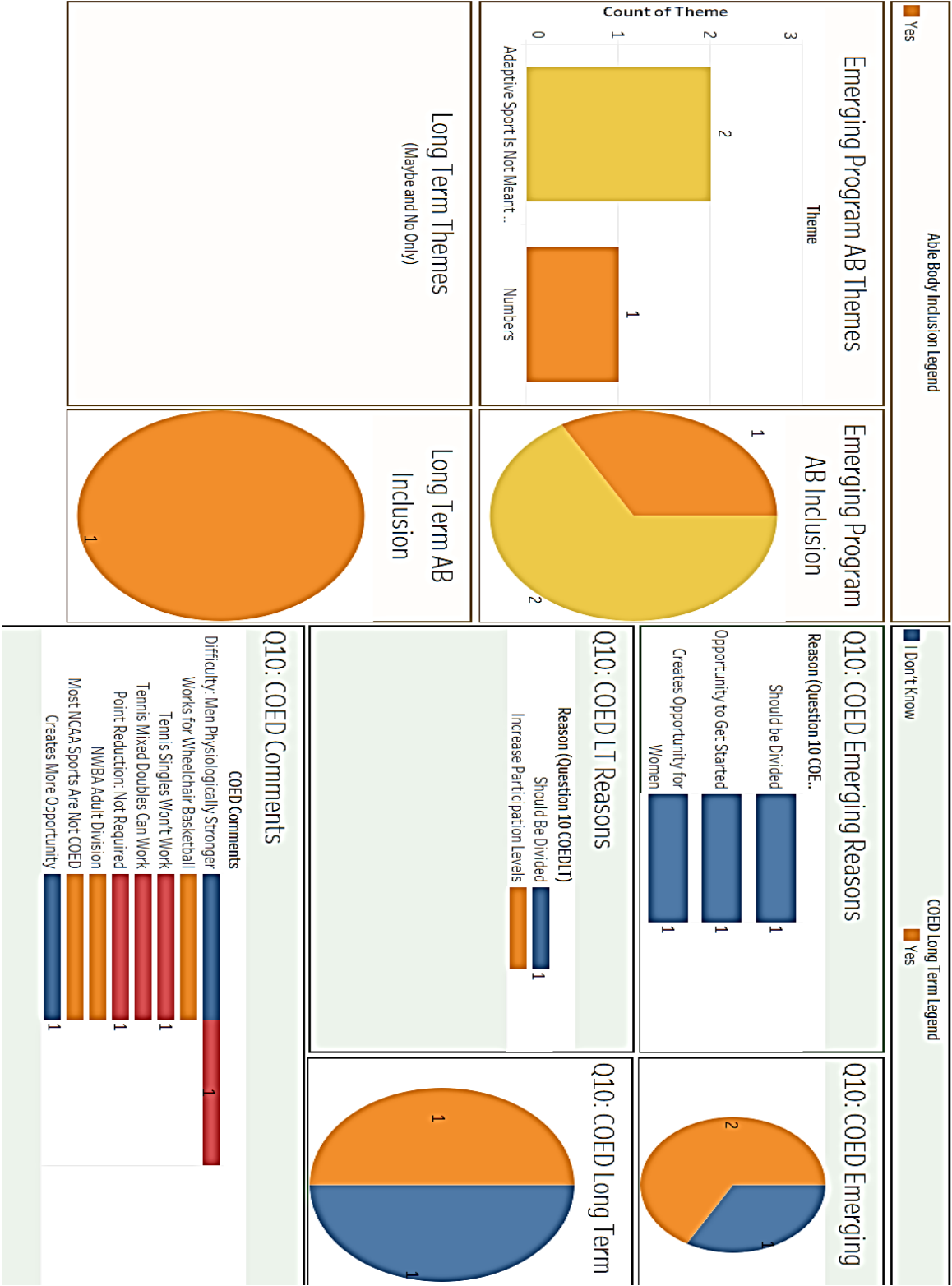
Note. The second of two pages with dashboard results for dependent variable 4 (Integration Strategies) for all participants. Titles of the graphs (proceeding left to right and top down) are “Emerging Program Able-Body Themes”, “Q10: Coed Emerging Sport Reasons”, “Q10: Coed Emerging Programs”, “Long Term Themes (Able-Body Inclusion)”, “Long Term Able-Body Inclusion”, “Q10: Coed Long Term Reasons”, “Q10 Coed Long Term”, “Q10: Coed Comments).

Figure 30
Dependent Variable 4 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group A Page 1



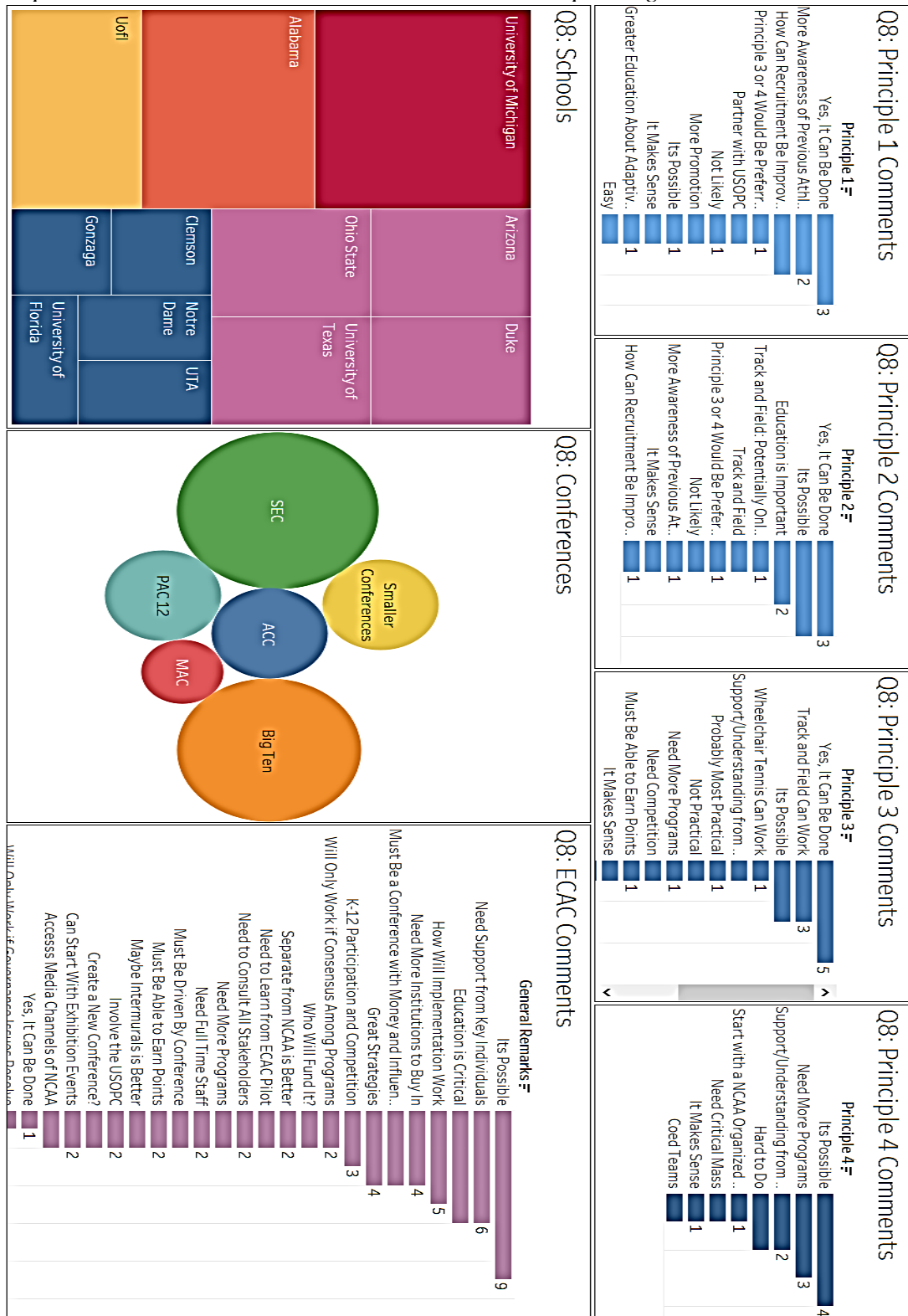
Note. Above is the first of two pages with dashboard results for dependent variable 4 (Integration Strategies for Collegiate Adaptive Sport in the NCAA) for stakeholder group A.

Figure 31
Dependent Variable 4 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group A Page 2



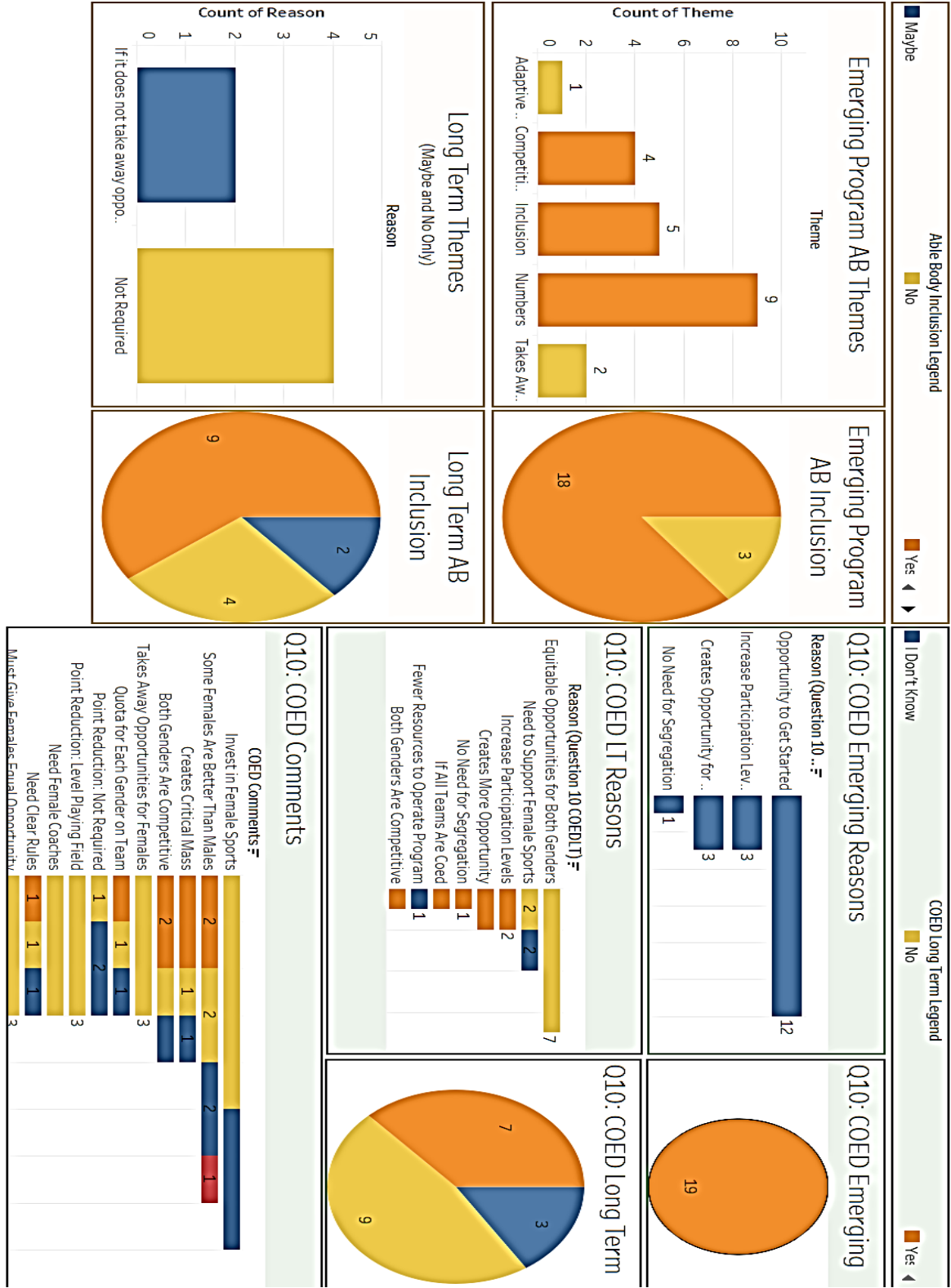
Note. Above is the second of two pages with dashboard results for dependent variable 4 (Integration Strategies for Collegiate Adaptive Sport in the NCAA) for stakeholder group A.

Figure 32
Dependent Variable 4 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group B Page 1



Note. Above is the first of two pages with dashboard results for dependent variable 4 (Integration Strategies for Collegiate Adaptive Sport in the NCAA) for stakeholder group B.

Figure 33
Dependent Variable 4 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group B Page 2



Q10: COED LT Reasons

Reason (Question 10 COEDLT) :-)

Equitable Opportunities for Both Genders

7

Need to Support Female Sports

2

Increase Participation Levels

2

Creates More Opportunity

1

No Need for Segregation

1

If All Teams Are Coed

1

Fewer Resources to Operate Program

1

Both Genders Are Competitive

1

Q10: COED Long Term

Count of Reason

If it does not take away oppo..

2

Not Required

9

Q10: COED Comments

COED Comments :-)

Invest in Female Sports

2

Some Females Are Better Than Males

2

Creates Critical Mass

1

Both Genders Are Competitive

2

Takes Away Opportunities for Females

3

Quota for Each Gender on Team

1

Point Reduction: Not Required

2

Point Reduction: Level Playing Field

3

Need Female Coaches

1

Need Clear Rules

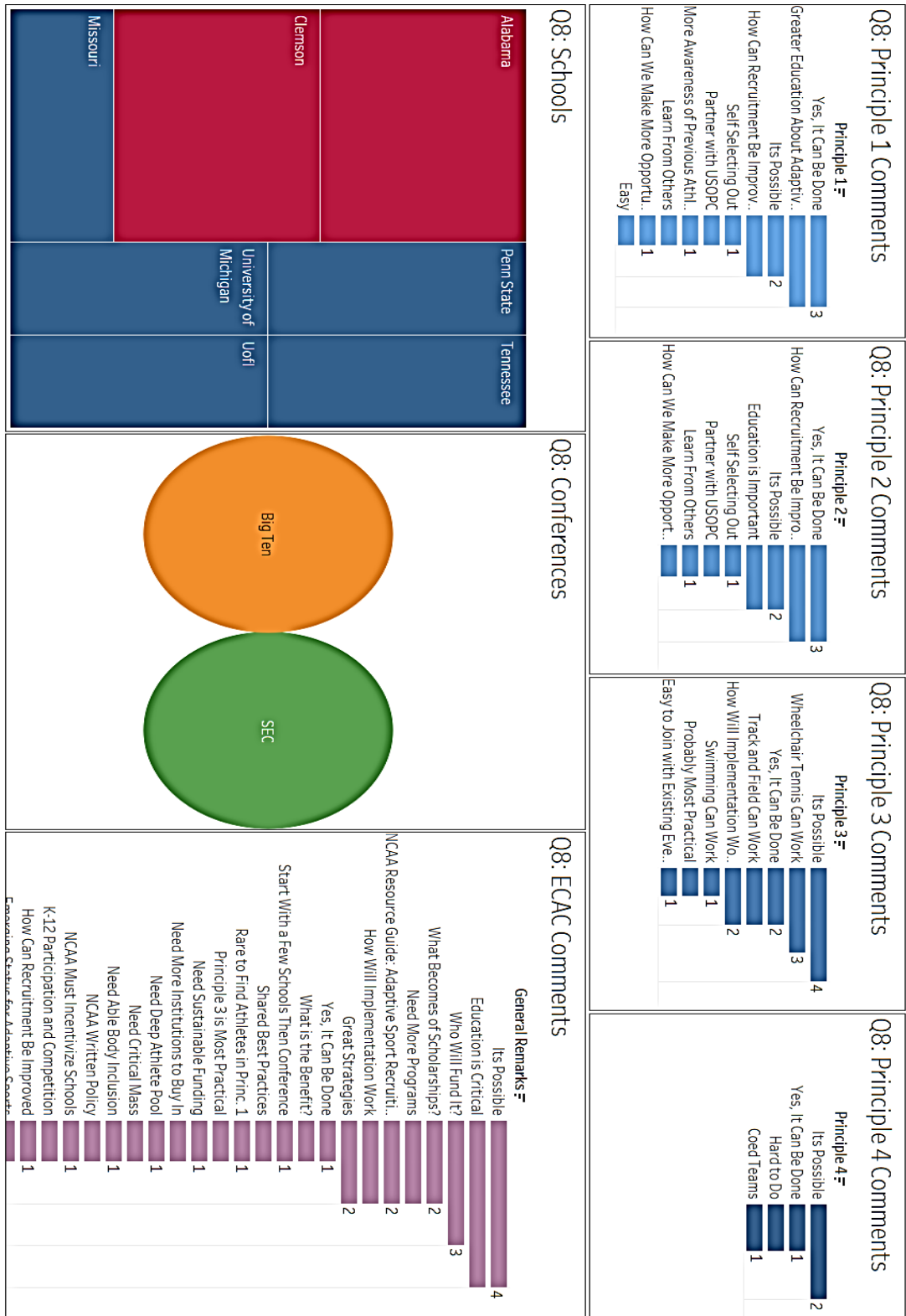
1

Must Give Females Equal Opportunity

3

Note. Above is the second of two pages with dashboard results for dependent variable 4 (Integration Strategies for Collegiate Adaptive Sport in the NCAA) for stakeholder group B.

Figure 34
Dependent Variable 4 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group C Page 1



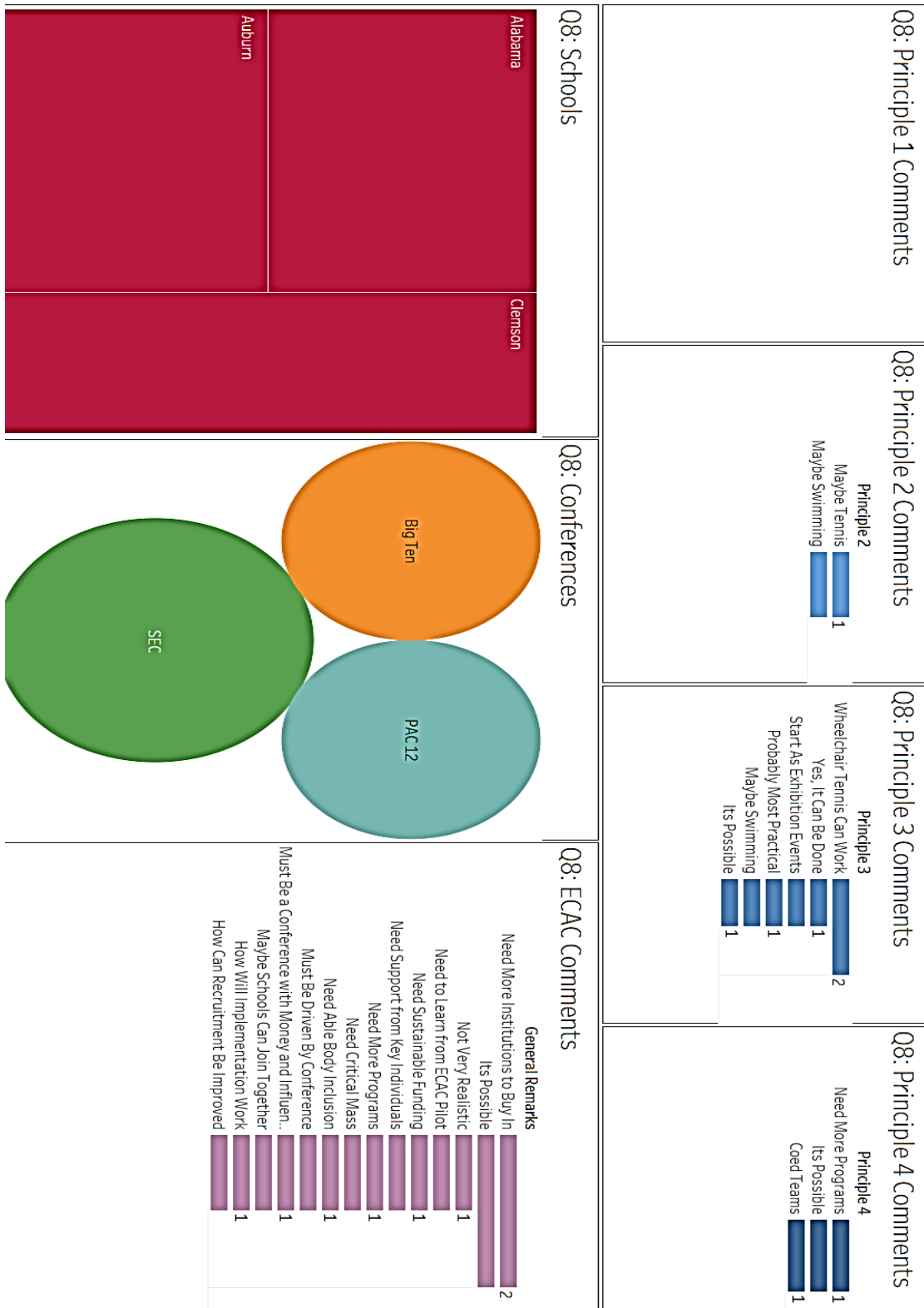
Note. Above is the first of two pages with dashboard results for dependent variable 4 (Integration Strategies for Collegiate Adaptive Sport in the NCAA) for stakeholder group C.

Figure 35
Dependent Variable 4 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group C Page 2



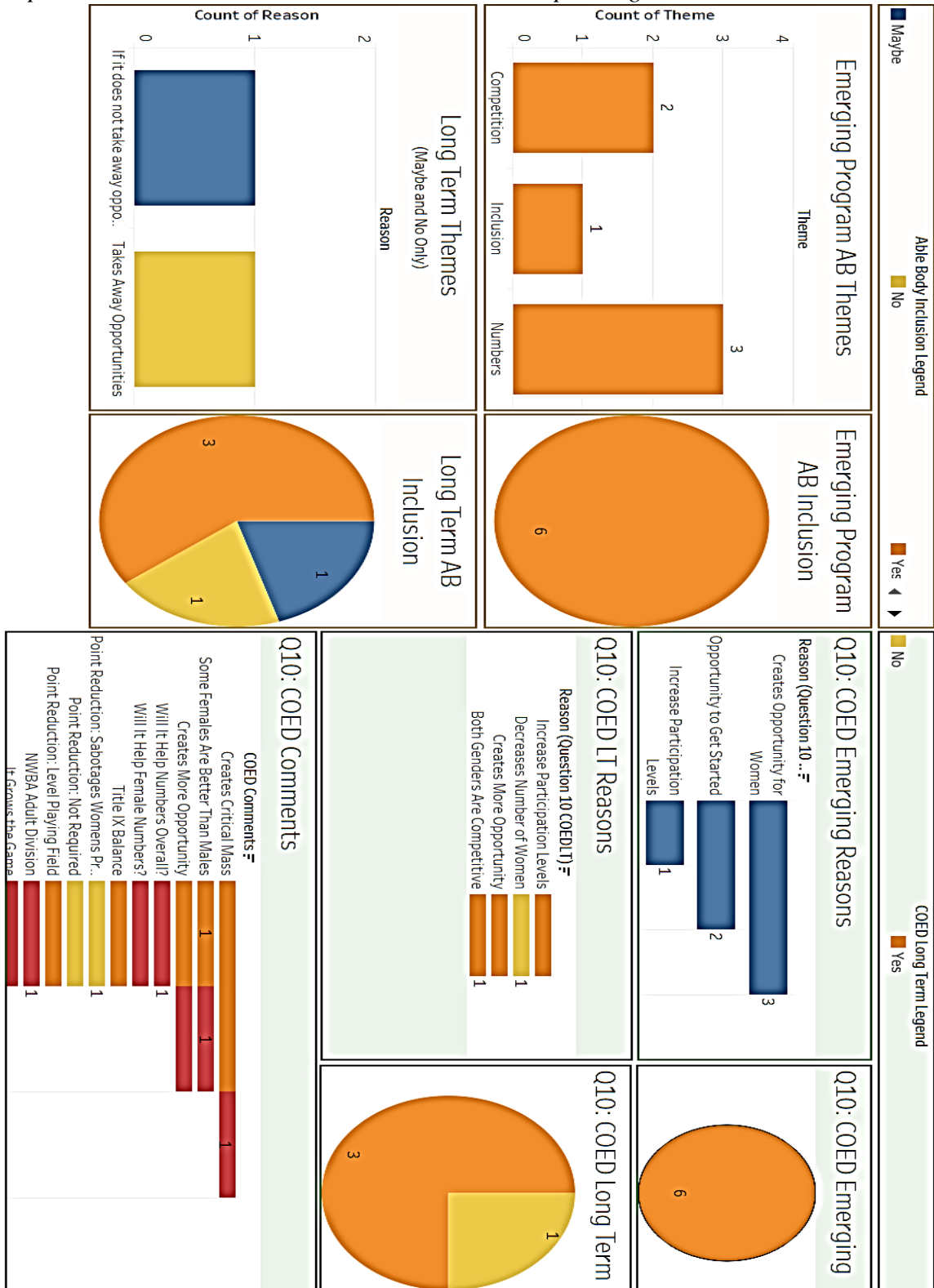
Note. Above is the second of two pages with dashboard results for dependent variable 4 (Integration Strategies for Collegiate Adaptive Sport in the NCAA) for stakeholder group C.

Figure 36
Dependent Variable 4 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group D Page 1



Note. Above is the first of two pages with dashboard results for dependent variable 4 (Integration Strategies for Collegiate Adaptive Sport in the NCAA) for stakeholder group D.

Figure 37
Dependent Variable 4 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group D Page 2



Note. Above is the second of two pages with dashboard results for dependent variable 4 (Integration Strategies for Collegiate Adaptive Sport in the NCAA) for stakeholder group D.

Dependent Variable 5: Is Sport a Major Life Activity?

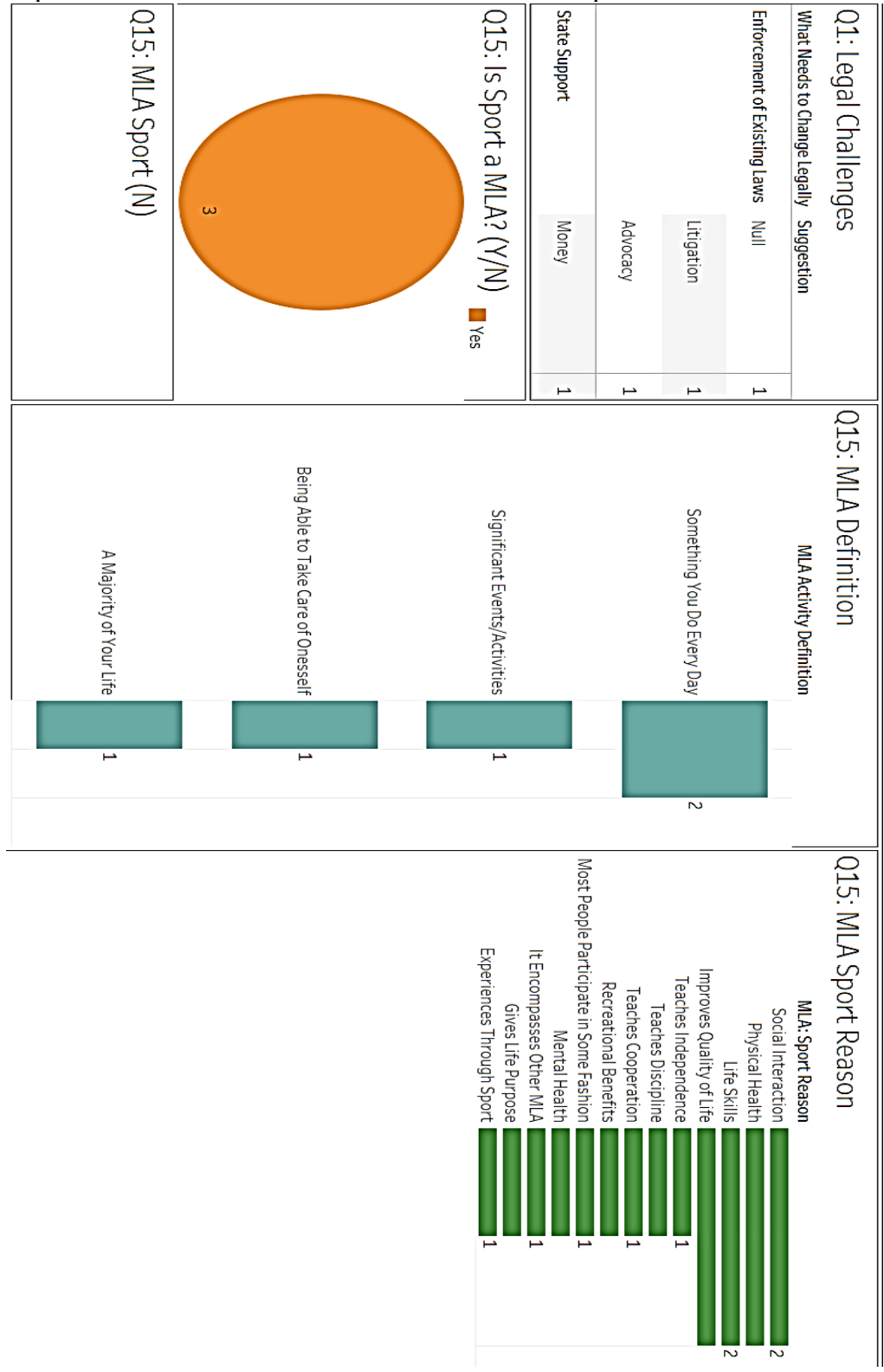
This section has the dashboards that display the results for participant responses to questions that pertained to the fifth dependent variable, “Is Sport a Major Life Activity?”. Question 15 was used to answer this dependent variable. The first dashboard (Figure 38) shows the results at the aggregate level (responses from all stakeholder groups). The remaining four dashboards (Figures 39 to 42) show the results for each stakeholder group individually (A through D).

Figure 38
Dependent Variable 5 Dashboard: Aggregate Results



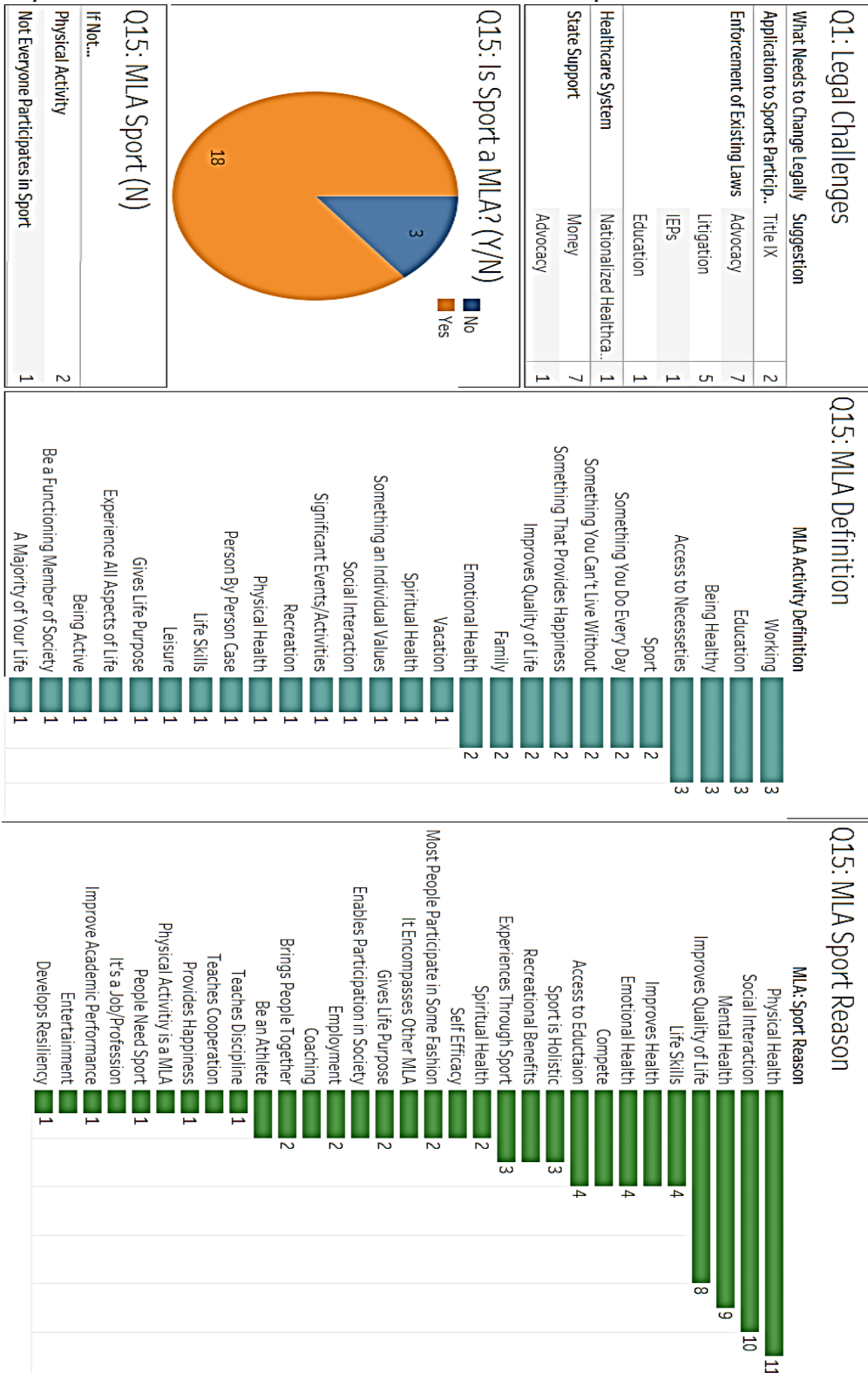
Note. Above are the dashboard results for dependent variable 5 (Is Sport a Major Life Activity?) for all participants. Titles of the graphs (proceeding left to right) are “Q1: Legal Challenges”, “Q15: Is Sport a Major Life Activity?”, “Q15: Major Life Activity Definition”, “Q15: Major Life Activity: Sport: Reason”.

Figure 39
Dependent Variable 5 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group A



Note. Above are the dashboard results for dependent variable 5 (Is Sport a Major Life Activity?) for stakeholder group A.

Figure 40
Dependent Variable 5 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group B



Note. Above are the dashboard results for dependent variable 5 (Is Sport a Major Life Activity?) for stakeholder group B.

Figure 41
Dependent Variable 5 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group C



Note. Above are the dashboard results for dependent variable 5 (Is Sport a Major Life Activity?) for stakeholder group C.

Figure 42
Dependent Variable 5 Dashboard: Stakeholder Group D



Note. Above are the dashboard results for dependent variable 5 (Is Sport a Major Life Activity?) for stakeholder group D.

Part V. Discussion

This section will discuss the major themes from each of the five dependent variables in order. Each dependent variable section begins with a brief description of the key findings followed by more in depth discussion of the themes at the aggregate level and any themes that stood out at the individual level that differed from the aggregate results.

Challenges and Barriers for Collegiate Adaptive Sport

Based on the recurring themes for this dependent variable, participants identified two key challenges for the growth of adaptive sport at the collegiate level. Perhaps the most common barrier identified was the lack of education and awareness about disability, adaptive sport and the value of adaptive sport in society. Participants identified this as a challenge for several reasons. It contributes to the preconceived notions about people with physical disabilities based on social constructs, there continues to be a lack of opportunities for people with physical disabilities to participate in physical activity and people do not recognize the need or opportunity to create competitive opportunities for adaptive athletes. Another common barrier that was identified is the lack of top-down support from leaders at post-secondary institutions and the NCAA. This likely manifests from a lack of understanding and awareness as mentioned prior. This results in key leaders, institutions and organizations not taking the initiative to provide the support that is necessary to rectify inequity. This section will go more in-depth on the major barriers identified by stakeholder groups at the aggregate level. It will also present some major barriers identified by specific stakeholder groups that were important to them but not at the aggregate level. The barriers presented in this section range on a spectrum of locus of control or accountability, in that some themes are more internal challenges that adaptive sport programs should address and some are more external barriers to adaptive sport programs. For example, self-governance of collegiate wheelchair basketball is more of an internal challenge, while lack of NCAA support is more of an external barrier. It is important to note that the themes are not definitively either internal or external to adaptive sport programs as all stakeholders play a part in mitigating or exacerbating the challenges and barriers that exist. Overall, there is a noticeable interconnectedness between the themes that will be explored and how all stakeholder groups are involved.

Aggregate Challenges and Barriers

There were five major themes at the aggregate level regarding the challenges and barriers that adaptive sports face at the collegiate level.

Education and Awareness about Disability and the Value of Adaptive Sport. A recurring theme across the stakeholder groups and what appears to be the largest barrier for the growth of adaptive sport was the lack of understanding about disability, what adaptive sport is, how it can be implemented and the value it has for participants. If adaptive sport is not at the front of mind for people as something that is valuable, necessary, or feasible, it will always be left out of important discussions and decisions. This is noticeable in the current landscape of adaptive sport with the lack of public-school programming, high school athletic association support and opportunities at the collegiate level. Another result from people's lack of awareness and knowledge is that important leaders, organizations, and programs do not know how to accommodate, integrate and support adaptive sport opportunities. Addressing this barrier will take different intervention strategies for each stakeholder group, but at the core of it, what is required is to understand the range of disabilities that exist, the necessity for physical activity for everyone, the competitive opportunities that exist for persons with a disability and how those endeavours can be supported to create inclusive sport experiences. This theme can be connected back to the critical change factor model in that what will be required is a change in beliefs about the medical stereotypes of persons with a disability and a change in attitudes and perceptions of those in key leadership positions (Fay, 1999). This theme can also be connected back to the structural issues that exist in the sport domain, namely the socialized misconception that persons with a disability cannot be elite athletes. Recommendations to address this barrier are discussed in the "opportunities" section.

Critical Mass/Participation Levels. All participants recognized that a challenge facing adaptive sport at the collegiate level are the low participation numbers. This results in several issues for the growth of adaptive sport at the collegiate level. First, it is difficult to have competitive depth at the collegiate level because of the relatively small pool of athletes. Second, it is difficult for new programs to develop because there are more competitors trying to attract the same finite pool of adaptive athletes. Third, it is difficult to get sponsors to notice adaptive sport and support them through partnership because they do not see the return on investment due

to the low numbers. Fourth, there is less incentive for athletic departments to support adaptive sport if there is a lack of competition at the collegiate level, particularly in their conference.

Enforcement of Existing Laws. Stakeholders recognize that there are laws in place that currently are not being enforced or abided by to the full extent that they should be. There must be a greater pressure on high schools and athletic associations to abide by the Rehab Act and the ADA to create opportunities for student athletes with disabilities to participate in extra-curricular athletics. A larger participation base in adaptive sport opportunities at a high school level could create a critical mass of athletes whose demand for opportunities at the collegiate level would be difficult to ignore. This is also a theme that appears in the critical change factor model, the change of laws and policies towards persons with physical disabilities (Fay, 1999)

Internal Issues for Adaptive Sports Programs. There are two internal challenges that came to the forefront for collegiate adaptive sport programs, the disparity between programs and the self-governance of intercollegiate wheelchair basketball.

Disparity Between Programs. There are several ways that disparity between collegiate level adaptive sport programs work against the growth of adaptive sport at the collegiate level. Established adaptive sport programs with secure funding have the ability to offer scholarships and other financial support to attract most of the top athletes to their schools. This is problematic for two reasons. First, there is no limit on the number of scholarships that can be provided to adaptive athletes in the current structure, creating a competitive advantage for schools that already have an established program with funding. Second, new adaptive sport programs do not have the capacity to give out scholarships because they lack the funding to do so. The disparity between scholarship offerings creates a situation of unbalance between programs for recruiting, it prolongs the growth phase of new programs and can be counterproductive to the growth of adaptive sport at the collegiate level. There is also a disparity between the facilities and resources that current programs have access to. This again entices the best athletes to go to a select few schools because they have the best resources. Lastly, the fact that intercollegiate wheelchair basketball is currently inter-divisional will always present innate issues. For example, Division 3 (D3) schools cannot give out athletic scholarships while Division 1 (D1) and Division 2 (D2) schools can. D2 and D3 schools also generally have smaller budgets to work with relative to D1 schools. Overall, what this results in is skewed competitiveness of each collegiate adaptive sport

program and slower growth. This creates a problem because it optically makes it appear that there is a lack of competitive depth in collegiate adaptive sport.

Self-Governance. The current self-governance of intercollegiate wheelchair basketball has its advantages. For example, flexibility around eligibility rules, academic standards, and recruitment policies to allow greater participation. However, there are several disadvantages that could stall further growth of the sport at the collegiate level. The issues mostly stem from self-serving bias when policies and rules are decided upon. Arguably, people are more inclined to vote or advocate for policies that are rooted in self-interest as opposed to the long-term collective benefit for adaptive sport. Additionally, because of conflicting interests and competitiveness, people are inclined to vote against potentially beneficial and innovative policies because it would help others more than it would help themselves in the short-term. This results in stagnation, lack of innovation and counterproductive action. With self-governance there is also greater flexibility around policies such as recruitment, which can incentivize unethical practices, such as non-monetary gifts to potential recruits. While self-governance may have its benefits, the costs associated with it outweighs the advantages in the long term.

Top-Down Support. According to participants, there are three sub-themes that surfaced with regard to the challenge of top-down support for the growth of collegiate adaptive sport. First, there is a lack of support from key leaders and their respective institutions. These leaders include such people as Presidents, Deans and Athletic Directors. To garner support from these senior leaders, it is important to educate and inform about why adaptive sport is meaningful, what its value proposition is for the school and why it should be supported. This is a critical change factor as identified by Fay (1999), support from key individuals that can lead to breakthroughs. Second, there is an aggregate sentiment that the NCAA does not effectively support student athletes with physical disabilities. This is largely because it is identified that the NCAA does not take any purposeful action to support athletes with physical disabilities or adaptive sports. While the ECAC inclusive sport initiative was a move in the right direction, it was not a result of a top-down initiative from the NCAA, it was a conference led decision and put into action by several individuals. Participants referred to the emerging sports program for women as something that could be of benefit for adaptive sport because of the reduction of institutional barriers. This point affirms the finding by Larkin et al (2014). Third, participants agreed that opportunity must exist for adaptive sport to grow. Referring to the background, interest and

ability do not develop in a vacuum, there must be an opportunity to generate growth (Brake, 2001). While one can never expect equal outcome, there must be an equal opportunity to begin with. Overall, there has been a lack of top-down support considering that disability is one of the NCAA's core areas of inclusion.

Funding. Funding has been identified as a major barrier and challenge for the growth of adaptive sport programming. Most programs are facing the difficulty of inconsistent and non-sustainable funding for their programming which limits the activities that can be undertaken to grow the program. Areas where more funding could be accessed according to participants include State funding, institutional support and sponsors. However, similar to the top-down support theme, there must be a reason for these groups to want to financially support adaptive sport. Questions that must be considered include, what support is required, how will it benefit the sponsor and what will the outcome from this support be?

Group A

Participants from group A brought forward several distinct challenges that they have experienced or perceive from their point of view.

Media Representation and Lack of Recognition. Participants from this group feel that the lack of exposure and recognition they receive for their athletic achievements causes challenges because it reflects society's view of adaptive sport and how it is valued. Furthermore, when they are recognized or represented in media, they are represented in a way that hyper-focuses on their disability rather than their athletic success. This creates a challenge because it perpetuates a lack of respect for the athletic talents of adaptive athletes. Change in the extent to which and the way media portrays athletes with a disability is part of the critical change factor model (Fay, 1999).

Awareness of Opportunities to Participate. Participants from this group recognized that a barrier in adaptive sport is that people are not aware of the opportunities that exist. This could be seen as a result of other challenges and barriers that have already been discussed, like a lack of education and awareness about adaptive sport and under representation in the media. It is a challenge that must be addressed because increasing awareness about existing opportunities could be an easy way to increase participation in the short term at the grassroots level which can trickle up to the collegiate level.

Group B

Participants from Group B presented several distinct challenges based on their experiences.

Inequitable Treatment. Participants from Group B shared that they perceive that the persons with a disability population in the collegiate athletic space is often neglected by institutions and organizations. This is exemplified through personal experiences in the lack of support from the top-down, the lip-service about diversity and inclusion efforts from the top-down and that diversity and inclusion initiatives at their institutions often do not include disability in their agendas. For example, one participant discussed how their staff and athletes were not invited to their school's diversity and inclusion forum. Additionally, when presented with the Title IX interview question about athletic departments making cuts, one of the most common responses from this group was "this could be us", demonstrating this group's distrust in organizations because of historical inequitable treatment. This could also be why a lot of participants in this group share the sentiment that separate organizational structures for them could be better.

Recruitment. Participants in Group B shared that identifying recruits and the recruitment process is a challenge for collegiate adaptive sport programs. This is a result of several factors. First, programs at the junior level are geographically distant, making it difficult to physically go out and recruit. Second, there are difficulties in identifying demographics of adaptive sport athletes because a lot of information resources and databases have restricted access to such personal information. Third, because of the financial disparity between programs, it is difficult to attract high calibre athletes if scholarship offers cannot be matched. To mitigate this problem, there must be a more efficient and effective way to connect with youth and make them aware about adaptive sport opportunities.

Geographic Distance. This refers to the geographic distance between collegiate programs in adaptive sport. Programs are spread out across the country making it expensive and time consuming to travel to competitions. This limits the number of competition opportunities through out the year because of the cost. It also conflicts with performance, because teams are faced with playing two or three times a day on back to back days on a single trip. These circumstances dissuade athletic departments from supporting adaptive sports because of the great travel expenses and lack of intra-conference competition. This is drastically different compared

to the varsity athlete experience where travel times are shorter, typically one game will be played in a day and there are more frequent competitive opportunities.

Group C

Participants from Group C identified several distinct challenges for adaptive sport.

Title IX. Participants from this group referenced Title IX a lot more than the other groups as a challenge for adaptive sport because of compliance implications at the athletic department level. It is evident that this is a common reference point for this group and seen as a limitation with regards to initiatives they can pursue. This creates a particular problem for team sports.

NCAA Somewhat Supports Student Athletes with Disabilities. Unlike the other groups that predominantly thought that the NCAA did not support student athletes with disabilities effectively, Group C was mixed and felt that the NCAA somewhat supports that population. Therefore, there appears to be a conflict regarding the perceived support that student athletes with disabilities are receiving. This can be problematic because if there is a perception from the top-down that there are satisfactory support systems in place for adaptive sports, then there is less likely going to be the pursuit of new or additional support programs to grow adaptive sport. The difference in views about the support the NCAA provides for adaptive athletes demonstrates the difficulty that can arise when viewing situations with a formal equity lens. Objectively, the rules from the NCAA support everyone the same (persons with and with no disability), but they do not take into account the structural inequities that require more supportive initiatives for adaptive athletes. This conflict speaks to the topic of legitimacy from the background. In this instance it demonstrates how “some” subset of the population is more normatively congruent with the governing body’s policies than another subset of the population. However, the fact that participants in Group C recognize that a better job could be done to support adaptive athletes could be a sign of a nascent shift in normative values.

COVID-19. Group C recognized the challenges COVID-19 would bring for the growth of adaptive sport in the near future. Most athletic departments are looking to make budget cuts at this time because COVID-19 has negatively impacted budgets and revenue. This makes it a difficult time for adaptive sports to pursue monetary support from institutions and other partners, however, there could be other non-monetary avenues for them to pursue. One must also think about what adaptive sports can do in the meantime to set themselves up for success once institutions have more cash flow and are no longer in a contractionary phase.

Group D

Group D identified several unique challenges based on their experiences with adaptive sport.

Sponsorship. Participants from Group D recognized that lack of sponsorship has been a challenge for the growth of adaptive sport. Particularly financial and equipment sponsors to help offset costs of participation or to start programs. This results in challenges for adaptive sport programs because they require sustainable funding sources to continue development and growth.

Money. Building off the last barrier, participants from Group D discussed that most of the challenges they face are rooted in financial difficulties and that access to more money could solve some of the challenges adaptive sport is facing. They particularly referenced State support and money from sponsors. However, it must be brought forward that participants from other groups recognized that having more money does not mean the current situation will get any better, the biggest change will come from a shift of perceptions and values of institutions, organizations and key leaders.

Publicity, Awareness and Media Representation. Similar to Group A, participants in Group D cited a lack of publicity, awareness and media representation as a barrier to the growth of adaptive sport. The participants expressed sentiments about how it is a manifestation of people lacking respect and recognition of adaptive sport as competitive sport. The Paralympics have helped with media representation, but it has yet to have a lasting effect on streaming sites or television networks. The fact that networks like ESPN show all sorts of sports (e.g. Cornhole) but do not televise or stream any adaptive sport events is a problem because it demonstrates that these networks do not value adaptive sport to the same extent. Greater exposure to adaptive sport in the mass media can help solve some of the challenges already presented such as awareness about adaptive sport, popularity of the sport and awareness of opportunity.

Guidelines for Adaptive Sport Programs. Participants in this group realize that a challenge for the growth of adaptive sport programs is that there are no resources, tools or guidelines to assist people with the initiation, development and growth of adaptive sport programs. People who start collegiate level programs do it “from scratch” every time and have to rely on networking with others who have started their own program. This creates a high barrier of entry for those looking to start programs because they have a lack of informational resources

to support them. Creating formal shared resources with best practices could help the growth of future adaptive sport programs.

Growth Opportunities for Collegiate Adaptive Sport

Based on the challenges and barriers identified for adaptive sport at the collegiate level in addition to the strengths and opportunities, participants identified three major opportunities that could be pursued that would help the growth of collegiate adaptive sport. Investing in K to 12 programming (educational programs or curriculums and sport opportunities through school for children from Kindergarten to Grade 12) was by far the most discussed theme among all the participants. K to 12 programming involves multiple initiatives, for example, school visits/assemblies, demonstrations of adaptive sport, immersive projects or field trips for classes, physical education curriculums that include adaptive activities or sports and competitive adaptive sports through high school athletic associations. There are several reasons why participants believe K to 12 programming to be a critical source of growth for adaptive sport at the collegiate level and will be expanded upon further in this section. Another growth opportunity that was identified by participants is a new NCAA emerging sports program that is meant for adaptive sports. Participants identified that this could be a way that the NCAA could better support the growth of adaptive sports at the collegiate level and help mitigate some of the structural barriers. This affirms the finding from the study done by Larkin et al. (2014). Third, participants were in agreement that the NCAA should create a designation similar to that of the Senior Woman Administrator for disability or inclusion in athletic departments. Participants suggested this could be a way for the NCAA and individual institutions to provide more top-down support for student athletes with disabilities and adaptive sport. There are athletes already in the NCAA that have a physical disability and having someone advocate for them in a leadership position could create a better experience for them and future adaptive athletes that will compete in the NCAA. This section will explore the major opportunities that were suggested by participants, the other opportunities identified at the aggregate level and opportunities brought forward by specific stakeholder groups.

Aggregate

At the aggregate level there were seven themes that were brought forward as opportunities for the growth of adaptive sport at the collegiate level.

K to 12 Programming. All stakeholder groups undoubtedly recognized that a greater investment in K to 12 programming, meaning elementary through high school, is a key opportunity for the growth of adaptive sport at the collegiate level for several reasons. First, it educates people from a young age about disability and adaptive sport to integrate it as part of normal institutional practices, settings and discourse, reducing the stigma surrounding disability and adaptive sport. Second, it increases awareness about adaptive sport opportunities and gets kids involved at a young age. Third, the people brought up in such an education system will be the future allies and supporters of persons with a disability. Ultimately, investing in K to 12 programming can increase participation levels in adaptive sport, build a larger recruiting base for collegiate level adaptive sport, build a critical mass of athletes and create a more holistic and integrated pipeline for athlete development. A technical report by Cottingham, Velasco, Laughlin and Lee (2016) found that most participants in adaptive sport programs in the United States found out about opportunities through “word of mouth”. A platform that would greatly spread the awareness about adaptive sport opportunities and increase participation in a more structured way would be schools because of the mass outreach that would be possible. In the technical report, school ranked as the fifth (and below average) most effective medium that people found out about adaptive sport opportunities likely because of the lack of programming, curriculums and discourse that currently exists (Cottingham et al., 2016). The importance of K to 12 programming is observed across other sports, including the example in the background about Esports. Esports builders recognized that high school programming was an investment for collegiate level programs.

Through the interviews, several recommendations were made as to how to integrate with the school system that could be helpful for the growth of adaptive sport.

School Visits. School visits involve current collegiate adaptive sport athletes (or Paralympians) visiting local schools to do presentations about adaptive sport and perform demonstrations of their sport for the students. This is a good starting point to get schools interested about adaptive sport and to start building relationships with local community stakeholders.

Physical Education Curriculums. The next progression is getting adaptive sport programming part of the physical education curriculum in the K to 12 grades. This implies full integration into the school system and is not just a one-off school visit. However, for this to be successful, adaptive sport leaders and national governing sport bodies should play active roles in consulting curriculum leaders on how to implement adaptive sport effectively. Furthermore, equipment to implement certain adaptive sports, like wheelchair basketball, may be inaccessible because of the cost. So, it is critical for adaptive sport leaders to work with educators to create modifications for existing activities, or create new activities, that can include people of all physical abilities. Fundamentally in physical education classes, educators are required to teach motor skills to students that meet State standards. Therefore, activities can be implemented in the school setting that are inclusive for everyone (inclusive sport) and that still meet the State requirements. The end goal is to work with schools to create adaptive sport opportunities that all students can participate in.

High School Athletic Associations. Adaptive sport leaders, national governing sport bodies and programs at the collegiate level should become involved at the state level to support initiatives similar to the ECAC Inclusive Sport model at the high school level. The reason is two-fold. First, it will help create participation opportunities at the high school level, which can create a critical mass of athletes that matriculate up to the collegiate level. Second, it could provide the NCAA “proof of concept” for the inclusive sport model and make adoption of similar strategies much easier at the NCAA level beyond the ECAC.

Media Exposure and Publicity. Just as media exposure and publicity was identified as a challenge, it is a great opportunity as well if a greater presence can be made. With all the different media platforms that exist today, there are multiple ways in which adaptive sport could gain greater exposure through the support of their respective institutions and the NCAA. Adaptive sport programs can work with their institutions to leverage existing media platforms to increase exposure. At the same time institutions must be open-minded to ideas about how to support their school’s adaptive sport programs because this helps build their brand and reputation as a university. Examples include, posts on the school’s or athletic department’s social media platforms, updates and announcements in school or athletic newsletters, on-campus posters, promotional video content for the school and video content on school or athletic department networks (e.g. University of Michigan’s MGOBLUETV). This support could also come from the

NCAA to create more awareness about adaptive athletes that already participate in the NCAA. Greater support from institutions and the NCAA to share media content featuring adaptive athletes and sports has two potential benefits. First, the NCAA or school gets to continue building its brand as an inclusive organization. Second, it creates exposure and awareness about adaptive athletes and their athletic achievements.

Able-Body Inclusion. Able-body inclusion in adaptive sport is identified as a major opportunity for the growth of adaptive sport at the collegiate level, particularly in the sport of wheelchair basketball. There are successful examples of able body-inclusion in wheelchair basketball, namely in Canada. It serves multiple benefits. It helps create a critical mass of athletes, it creates more opportunities to participate in the sport, it is fully inclusive in that people of all physical abilities can play and it socially integrates people from all backgrounds to play a common sport. The pros and cons of able-body inclusion at the collegiate level will be discussed in the section “Integration Strategies”.

NGB Support. It has been identified by stakeholder groups that NGBs could play an essential role in facilitating the growth of adaptive sport at the collegiate level. The reason why this should be of importance to them is that grassroots and domestic growth at a junior level directly impacts future national team performance.

Resources for K to 12 Programming and the Development Pathway. As discussed before, NGBs in adaptive sport have the specific knowledge to help create curriculums and informational resources for the K to 12 level. It is also important for NGBs to understand how competition at the high school level and ultimately the collegiate level fits into the long term development of athletes and how that prepares them for a pathway of high-performance, competitive recreation or recreation. Ultimately not all participants will end up on the national team, however, it would be wise for NGBs to invest in and support K to 12 initiatives because it builds a larger participation base in their sport. By developing a supportive pipeline of athlete development, it can lead to greater retention of athletes in the long-term as athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers or advocates.

Coach Education. Coach education is a critical investment for NGBs. It builds a sustainable pool of qualified coaches for each level of programming and it ensures a standardized quality of athlete development that prepares them for each stage of their careers. Just as athletes require a development pathway to attain all the appropriate benchmarks along the way to be well

rounded and practiced in their fundamentals, coaches require the same. At each level of athletic competition there are new challenges and expectations that coaches will face and they must be prepared effectively. NGBs can facilitate coach education by providing online training resources, running coaching clinics and camps and providing mentorship opportunities. These ideas are especially critical when discussing K to 12 programming as a growth opportunity for collegiate adaptive sport. Not everyone is familiar with adaptive sport in the school system, additionally, there may be external community members that want to start their own program or club. Therefore, NGBs should work to create resources to support new coaches or volunteers, junior level coaches and collegiate level coaches. A recent example of an online resource tool is the new initiative called “The Training Zone” created by the Challenged Athletes Foundation and the National Wheelchair Basketball Association. “The Training Zone” is a series of online videos of Paralympic wheelchair basketball athletes providing instructions and demonstrations for fundamental basketball skills (Challenged Athletes Foundation, 2020).

NCAA Support. Earlier, lack of support from the NCAA was identified as a barrier for the growth of adaptive sport at the collegiate level. Three ideas have been put forward by participants as to how the NCAA can be more purposeful in supporting adaptive athletes and sport.

Minimum Sponsor Exemptions for Paralympic Sports. As per the most recent rule book for NCAA D1 sport, the minimum number of schools required to sponsor a championship sport are 50 and 40 for men and women respectively. Furthermore, if the sport is an Olympic sport, then it is allowed to be under the minimum sponsor requirement (NCAA, 2019). Based on those two statements, the NCAA should do two things. One, provide a similar exemption to Paralympic sports. Two, lower the minimum number of schools required to sponsor a Paralympic sport. As discussed in the background, the population of persons with a disability is significantly smaller than the persons with no disability population. Therefore, based on proportionality, the minimum sponsor requirement should be much lower than what it is for male and female sports. This builds the premise for the recommendation made by Larkin et al. in 2014 and will be presented next.

Emerging Adaptive Sport Rule. As was discussed in the paper by Larkin et al. (2014), participants suggested a new or revised emerging sport program should be implemented that supports adaptive sport. Participants suggested that such a program could help reduce the

institutional barriers they currently face to become varsity or NCAA sports, it could help with growing awareness about adaptive sport and potentially increase competition. All these suggestions affirm the findings from the study done by Larkin et al (2014).

Senior Disability Administrator. Similar to the points brought forward in the background about the importance of having a senior woman administrator in the athletic department, participants shared sentiments about having someone that advocates for disability at the athletic department level. Common responses included that it is a matter of equity to have people advocate for the underrepresented and that everyone has a right to representation, especially when they have been left out of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives before. Participants recognized that if there are no senior leaders in the athletic department that advocate for disability, those opportunities will continue to not be available for adaptive athletes and sports. Participants also stated that for such a designation to be effective, there must be specified responsibilities for the role and that persons in the role should be engaged in meaningful decisions in the athletic department and on NCAA committees.

Institution and Conference Support. Participants identified that institutions and conferences should take a leadership role in creating and implementing initiatives to support adaptive sport. Furthermore, it was recognized that change will only happen if institutions within a conference are all in agreement to support adaptive sport initiatives. It is very difficult for change to happen at a single institution because they are very much guided by their peers within the conference. Therefore, conference led initiatives, similar to those taken by the ECAC could be most effective in instituting change at a greater number of schools. This supports the points raised in the background about legitimacy. Greater pressure within the interconnected network of the NCAA could cause the greatest amount of change. At a more individual level, there are ways that institutions can support adaptive sport programs, like the media exposure and publicity example given earlier. Other ways that athletic departments can support adaptive sport programs in non-monetary ways include helping them with apparel and uniform deals through existing sponsorship contracts and being cooperative and assist with facility access to support their training. The emphasis here is that it is not always about money, its about creating a level of understanding between stakeholders about how they can mutually support each other to create and enjoy shared success.

Community and Grassroots Engagement and Events. Participants identified that building relationships with the community is an important way to grow adaptive sport at the collegiate level. This is because these relationships can be mutually supportive in different ways in providing resources, promotions, advocacy and funding. Examples provided by participants are divided into five categories below.

Education and Engagement. Examples provided include athlete and athlete alumni meetings with key leaders from the institution, athlete discussion panels at the university and in the community, sport demonstrations for athletic department and institution staff, summer camps, school visits and adaptive multi-sport expositions at the university to generate interest and awareness.

Fundraisers. Examples provided include doing corporate events for donors (e.g. have them come play an adaptive sport as a company team-building exercise), golf tournaments, doing charitable games with a professional sports team (e.g. one school did a charity wheelchair basketball game with an NFL team) and coordinating an inclusive recreational sport exposition for members of the local community.

Media. Participants gave examples that included working with local newspapers at the university and in the community, doing radio and podcast interviews with local stations and going through university media channels and streaming networks to advertise and promote their adaptive sport programming. The intention of these activities is to generate visibility and awareness of opportunities and events that exist.

Sponsorship and Partnership. Examples provided included working with wheelchair companies and partnering with local hospitals. Participants recognized that given the recent merger of the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee (Refer to Appendix E) there could exist new opportunities to partner with them to grow adaptive sport, whether its through the provision of informational resources, funding or promotions.

Group A

Participants from Group A stated that the fact that scholarships are offered by collegiate adaptive sport programs is a strength for programs that are able to. This suggests similarity to Esports in that scholarship offerings played a big part in incentivizing participation at the high school level. If more schools can offer scholarships, it could incentivize greater participation in adaptive sports. However, it must be recognized that there cannot be more scholarships unless

there is greater financial support from the State, post-secondary institutions, the NCAA or other sponsors.

Group C

Participants in Group C identified several opportunities that were different than the ones mentioned in the aggregate level.

Campus Accessibility. Participants in stakeholder Group C recognized that a way that they could be more supportive of persons with a disability and adaptive athletes is making sure their campus is accessible. The inaccessibility of a campus and its facilities plays a major role in perpetuating structural inequities. Athletic departments typically already have checklists in place to make sure their facilities follow ADA guidelines, however, that does not always identify all the aspects of a campus or facility that are inaccessible. It is recommended that institutions and athletic departments do a physical tour through their facilities with persons that have a disability (e.g. mobility, visual, hearing, etc.) to have them identify all existing or potential barriers to their full enjoyment and participation in facilities and events. At the end of the day, an inclusive campus benefits everyone and maximizes the enjoyment for all demographics.

Alumni Donation Networks. An opportunity that participants in this group recognized was the potential new alumni or donor networks that could be accessed as a result of the university supporting adaptive sport. One participant stated that they received a significant increase in donations when individuals discovered that their school sponsors a wheelchair basketball program. This is an example of an add-value that adaptive sports can bring to athletic departments and institutions.

Senior Inclusion Administrator. Contrary to aggregate results, participants from Group C suggested that instead of having a designation within the athletic department that just focuses on disability, that it should be focused on inclusion in general. Inclusion refers to the five core areas targeted by the NCAA including disability, international students, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity and women. Participants favored having someone oversee inclusion rather than disability specifically because it would lead to a situation where a designation would be required for each area of inclusion. From an organizational standpoint, having that many designations could cause disorganization. However, participants from all groups identified that the drawback to having a designation for inclusion in general is that individuals would have a bias as to which initiatives would be dealt with greater importance. This potential hierarchy of initiatives and

support causes inequity because it cannot be justified to advocate more for one group over another.

Group D

Participants from group D recognized the significance of the name change that occurred last year for the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee, bringing Team USA under one name (United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee, 2019). It has symbolic value in that it is attempting to structurally change the way high-performance sport is perceived in the United States. It is also a potential indicator of what could come in the future, perhaps the greater support and growth of adaptive sports in the United States by organizations like the USOPC. Participants in this group state that a future partnership between the USOPC and the NCAA could be of value for adaptive sport because the USOPC could provide guidance as to how the NCAA could support adaptive sport opportunities. Additionally, with Los Angeles hosting the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, there could be strategic initiatives set in place that could help the growth of adaptive sport from the momentum of the Games and the legacy thereafter.

Goals for the Future of Collegiate Adaptive Sport

Looking at the future of adaptive sport at the collegiate level, participants identified that varsity and NCAA status would be a desirable end goal to work towards. However, three key findings came as a result of the themes from participant responses that should be addressed in working towards that end goal. First, participants discussed how K to 12 programming in the short-term could help grow adaptive sport and the critical mass required to support adaptive sport at the collegiate level. Second, it is imperative that adaptive sport programs build relationships with the athletic department and other key leaders at their institution. Participants shared that to successfully build a relationship with upper administration, adaptive sport programs must have a sound value proposition. Key leaders want to know such things as what the competitive advantages are through supporting adaptive sport, how it benefits the school and what is required to support the program. Third, to facilitate adoption as varsity and NCAA sport, there must be greater geographic density of adaptive sport programs. Athletic departments are guided by competition within their conference and will support sports that other schools have or are interested in supporting. Therefore, new adaptive sport programs should be focused on conferences that have existing programs. This section will explore the key findings that were discussed in this introduction as well as other short-term, long-term and sustainability goals for

adaptive sport programs. This section will also discuss the pros and cons associated with varsity and NCAA status and the things that should be considered by all stakeholders involved if adaptive sport pursues that goal.

Short Term Goals

Participants at the aggregate level identified several key short-term goals to help adaptive sport grow at the collegiate level.

Support from Key Individuals and Institutions: Secure Funding. An important factor for the sustainability of collegiate adaptive sport programs is garnering institutional support from key individuals at their respective institutions and securing stable funding. Most programs start off by relying on grants. The collegiate adaptive sport programs that have had longevity and stability in their programming have been able to get a consistent budget line through their school. Participants mentioned that they were able to make such advancements when relationships were made with school Chancellors, Presidents, Deans, the Disability Resource Center, the Recreation and Fitness Department and Student Life.

Continue Growing the Number of Programs. Participants recognized that there has been consistent growth in the number of adaptive sport programs over recent years. Whether these programs will have longevity or not is uncertain, but it is a sign of potential growth. This is particularly encouraging as more programs are starting to appear with greater geographical proximity to each other. Continued growth, and specifically in areas that already have programs, will lead to longer term success because it facilitates competitive opportunities between programs. Leaders looking to start new adaptive sport programs should seek out opportunities in areas such as midwestern and southeastern United States.

K to 12 Programming. K to 12 programming continued to be a recurring theme in participants' responses. K to 12 programming was identified as a short-term goal that can help the growth of adaptive sport at the collegiate level. K to 12 programming can range from school visits, adaptive sport curriculums, to high school adaptive sport competitions.

Group A. Group A participants identified a couple short-term goals in addition to the main goals discussed at the aggregate level.

Youth Multi-Sport Exposure. Participants from Group A suggested that NGBs and the USOPC should help facilitate multi-sport camps, clinics and events for youth to get them (and their parents) exposed to adaptive sport. Participants in group A stated that a barrier to getting

individuals involved in adaptive sport at a young age is not knowing what opportunities exist for them. A proposed way to address this is community-oriented events and camps that get children and parents exposed to adaptive sport at a young age.

Integrate Adaptive Sports with Existing Events. Participants from Group A noted that a short-term goal for adaptive sports and the NCAA should be to pursue integration of adaptive sport events into existing sport competitions and events (this is Principle 3 of the ECAC 4 Principles of Sport Inclusion). For example, the addition of select wheelchair track races to existing track and field meets or the addition of wheelchair tennis to existing intercollegiate tennis events. This supports the work that is being done for the ECAC inclusive sport initiative and will be expanded upon more in the “Integration Strategies” section.

Group C. Participants in Group C identified a couple short-term goals in addition to the main goals discussed at the aggregate level.

Support from Local Government. Participants from Group C recognized that support from local and State government could be beneficial for adaptive sport growth. If governments devoted budget lines towards supporting adaptive sport in public institutions, it could incentivize more institutions and organizations to support adaptive sport initiatives. An example is the Arizona state government that has earmarked \$160 thousand dollars in this year’s budget to go towards the University of Arizona’s adaptive athletic program that will be used for scholarships, uniforms and travel (Finley, 2019).

Support Adaptive Athletes in the NCAA. Participants from Group C stated that the easiest path to support adaptive athletes in the short-term is to find ways to better support athletes that already compete on NCAA teams. This is described as “low hanging fruit” in that it is an easy way for athletic departments and the NCAA to support adaptive athletes more effectively that can lead to future growth. Participants suggested that athletic departments could benefit from resources or guidelines from organizations like the USOPC to better recruit and identify Paralympians that could compete at the NCAA level.

Group D. Participants from Group D stated that the Paralympics are an event that has progressively created greater exposure to and awareness about adaptive sport in mainstream society. Participants shared that greater marketing and reporting on the Paralympics in mainstream media channels can help create more of a sustained effect on society. They also identified that the LA 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games is a great opportunity to generate

greater awareness and support for adaptive sport in the lead up to the Games and afterwards. Furthermore, that an adaptive sport program like the one at San Diego State University could particularly benefit given the proximity to the host site.

Long Term Goals

Participants at the aggregate level identified several key long-term goals for collegiate adaptive sport.

Institutional Support of Adaptive Sport. Identified as a short-term goal, institutional support is a long-term goal as well. However, this is categorized as becoming embedded within the institution as part of its identity. Well established collegiate adaptive sport program staff state that a strength of their program is that it has become part of their institution's brand or reputation. Participants suggest that this happens through several ways. First, there must be buy in from key individuals like the school's President and Chancellor. There also must be buy in from people in Athletic Departments, not just the Director, but the Associate Directors, the Senior Woman Administrator and the coaches. This further supports the critical change factor model established by Fay (1999). Second, programs must cultivate student support on campus. If the students show support for adaptive sport initiatives, whether its recreational programming, student-run clubs, or attending competitions, upper administration of the University will take notice. Third, adaptive sport programs must come up with a value proposition for their institution as there must be a reason for the institution to want to support an adaptive sport program. Four items stand out as suggested by participants that have been effective for developing value for their school. First, it helps institutions build their brand as a school that is inclusive. Second, it can bring in new donors for the school. Third, it can help increase undergraduate admissions because if the institution has adaptive sports programming it will naturally attract the persons with a disability demographic to the school because of the inclusive reputation. Fourth, it adds to the student and faculty experience at the institution because of enriched diversity and exposure to people with different lived experiences.

Scholarship Money. Scholarship money was identified as a long-term goal because programs and institutions recognize how that incentivizes participation in the sport and facilitates the acquisition of higher quality athletes. This supports the discussion about Esports and how it has become successful in growing its participation base. However, money for scholarships is

only possible if the programs have the budget to do so. As a result, the ability to get scholarship money comes after institutional support.

NCAA Status. Participants identified that attaining NCAA status should be a long-term goal for adaptive sports because of the social status that comes with it. NCAA status can serve to legitimize a sport which can have several effects. It can change the perception of adaptive sport in society, deconstruct the social stigmas around disability and increase participation in adaptive sport.

Media Coverage. In the long-term, increased media coverage of adaptive sport competitions and the Paralympics could help the growth of adaptive sport. As of now there is limited coverage of existing events. Increased media coverage can come from institutions and the NCAA streaming adaptive sport content on their networks, local media outlets featuring adaptive sport content and major television networks like ESPN covering high-level competitions.

Group D. Participants in Group D stated that a partnership with the USOPC and the LA 28' foundation could provide several benefits for the growth of adaptive sport in the long-term. These include new funding sources, media exposure and resource support for the NCAA to better create opportunities for adaptive athletes.

Sustainability

Participants at the aggregate level identified several key objectives that could help make collegiate adaptive sport programs more sustainable in the future.

Full-Time Staff. At the aggregate level, participants shared that one of the key factors for successful adaptive sport programs is having a full time staff member that is solely focused on building the program and doing the administrative work. Participants shared that this full-time staff member should not be a coach, student at the school, or someone that has additional professional commitments such as being a professor at the school. It must be an individual that will be there full time with full attention directed to the program to build the necessary relationships internally with the school and externally with community partners, national governing sport bodies, donors and other programs. However, the difficulty of having a full-time staff member is allocating the funds to have such a position. Considering that this could be an integral role to the success of a program, it must be built into the budget line when approaching institutions and must be communicated as to why having this line item is important. It is an investment in the growth and sustainability of the program.

Clearly Identified Vision and Mission. Participants shared mixed perceptions about what the desirable end goal is for adaptive sport at the collegiate level. If any progress is going to be made at the collegiate level to grow programming and make it more competitive there must be a definitive vision and mission. Adaptive sport program directors and national governing sport body leaders must come together to collectively outline a vision and mission for adaptive sport at the collegiate level. Otherwise, if programs act in an individual manner and towards different end goals, it will be difficult to make collective progress. Regardless of whether programs decide that they should work toward NCAA status, a consensus on the direction that should be taken will help with more strategic growth.

Able-Body Inclusion. Able-body inclusion in adaptive sport resurfaced as a key to making adaptive sport programs sustainable in the future as it increases participation numbers, encourages members of the school community to become involved and changes perceptions around adaptive sport and disability.

Varsity and NCAA Status

Most participants agree that becoming a varsity sport and joining the athletic department is a desirable goal for the future of adaptive sport. Most participants also agree that NCAA status is a desirable goal for the future of adaptive sport, however more participants responded that they were unsure. For both varsity and NCAA status, there are pros and cons.

Pros.

Respect/Status/Recognition. Participants perceive that one of the major benefits of attaining varsity and NCAA status is the respect, status and recognition that would come with it. Sentiments were shared that varsity and NCAA status could help change people's perceptions about disability and adaptive sport. Participants stated that until adaptive sport is recognized in the same way that able-bodied sports are, the false perception that adaptive sports is not as competitive will persist. Participants said that even though it might be just a title (Varsity status or NCAA status) to some, it holds a lot of cultural weight and that there is a reason why the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee changed its name.

Increased Awareness. Participants shared that attaining varsity and NCAA status would increase awareness about adaptive sport in mainstream society which can have several benefits. First, a change in perception about disability and adaptive sport. Second, an increase in participation in adaptive sport. Third, new opportunities for sponsorship and funding.

Legitimacy. Participants stated that attaining varsity and NCAA status would provide legitimacy for adaptive sport and adaptive athletes. It would change people's perceptions of adaptive sport to think about it as competitive sport and the athletes as competitive athletes.

Access to Resources. Participants recognize that varsity and NCAA status could result in greater access to resources to support adaptive sport. Examples include, access to facilities, sponsorship opportunities, media coverage and educational services (e.g. tutoring, career guidance, etc.).

Standardization of Rules. Participants recognized that the standardization of rules could be a benefit of being part of the NCAA, specifically with regards to scholarship allocation. Currently there are no limits on the number of scholarships an adaptive sport program can give out to athletes, so it creates an unfair advantage for schools that have the money to do so. This makes it difficult for newer programs to recruit athletes. Regardless of whether adaptive sports end up in the NCAA, those that govern adaptive sport at the collegiate level should consider placing stricter rules on things like scholarships to create more equity among programs.

Group A. Participants in Group A shared that a pro for them in gaining varsity and NCAA status would be increased media coverage. NCAA sports are covered a lot more on different media networks and streams, which could mean more publicity for adaptive sport. Participants shared that media coverage would be a great asset for growing adaptive sport.

Cons.

Rules. Participants stated that a drawback to varsity and NCAA status are all the rules that are accompanied with it. The rulebook for Division 1 in the NCAA is almost 500 pages long. That creates two problems. First, it requires someone, like a full-time staff member discussed earlier, to stay on top of all the rules to make sure the sport or program is compliant. To put it in perspective, the National Wheelchair Basketball Association's rule book for the intercollegiate division is only 33 pages. Second, with a greater depth of rules and stricter rules, there is less flexibility for adaptive sports regarding admissions and recruitment.

Less Flexibility with Academic Standards, Recruitment and Training. Currently, adaptive sports programs have a lot of flexibility in their academic standards, recruitment and training. This serves to benefit adaptive sports programs because it increases the number of athletes they can have given the lower participation numbers at the present time. However, the flexibility of these rules could also incentivize unethical practices with regards to how schools

recruit athletes and operate. Apart from that concern, it is recognized that a drawback to NCAA status would be that adaptive sports must be more strict in how they approach things like academic standards, eligibility criteria and recruitment. This can place coaches in difficult positions. For example, they must be prepared to cut someone from the team if that athlete does not maintain an academic standard. Furthermore, there is the issue that the NCAA allows four years of eligibility whereas the NWBA allows five years in their intercollegiate division. This could be of detriment to adaptive sport programs because they could have lower numbers as a result of this rule. Lastly, the NCAA has rules regarding the amount of training time per week for sports teams and athletes.

Less Budget. Participants expressed concern that adaptive sports programs could potentially face reduced budgets in the athletic department because they are competing with all other varsity sports for funding. There could potentially be more funding outside the athletic department because of access to different budget lines, grants and funds.

Group B. Compared to other groups, Group B was much more unsure of whether adaptive sports should try to become varsity and NCAA sports. While most agreed that it is a desirable goal, there were a lot more responses categorized as “I Don’t Know”. The more uncertain sentiments are rooted in concerns about the rules and loss of flexibility as described above. There is also a concern about how they will actually be treated in an athletic department. Specifically, whether the athletic department will actually be inclusive and if other teams and staff will respect them. Another concern this group has is the “small fish, big pond” situation that could occur in the athletic department setting. They feel that becoming part of the athletic department could result in not getting the support services they need to be successful. Additionally, participants expect that they would have much lower political capital in the athletic department relative to sports like football and basketball. This point is important in supporting the potential benefit that a Senior Disability Administrator or Senior Inclusion Administrator could have in the athletic department.

Group C. While most groups presented some disadvantages about joining the athletic department or NCAA, participants from group C did not volunteer any disadvantages in their responses. This is an interesting result because it suggests that they do not perceive that the current system or institution is established in a way that creates structural inequities. This misalignment in perspectives between stakeholder groups could result in issues when looking to

integrate in the future because some people may believe the institution is not supporting them enough while others may see it as not necessary because they are treating everyone equally. As discussed in the background, this difference in viewpoint arises from the lens through which different stakeholders view sources of inequity.

Athletic Department and NCAA Considerations.

Participants shared a number of comments, concerns, considerations and suggestions that would have to be considered before adaptive sport becomes part of any athletic department or the NCAA.

Adaptive Sport Internal Concerns. The following points mostly impact collegiate adaptive sport programs.

Numbers. As of now, adaptive sports at the collegiate level do not have the numbers to become varsity or NCAA sports based on current rules. New strategies should be explored to increase current participation levels to reach a critical mass of athletes. However, it is important to note, that this is not a limitation for individual adaptive athletes that have the athletic ability to be on NCAA teams. Therefore, it is worthwhile to implement strategies to better support the recruitment and training of these individual adaptive athletes.

Eligibility and Recruitment Rules. As discussed earlier, adaptive sports programs have more relaxed eligibility and recruitment rules. This is advantageous because programs can use this to their advantage to recruit students. However, the athletic department has strict rules that must be followed to be compliant with NCAA policies and adaptive sport programs must be prepared to comply.

Small Fish, Big Pond. As mentioned before, most programs are currently located in the school of medicine, school of kinesiology the school's disability center and other locations. This serves the programs well because they get greater attention and resource allocation devoted to them. This could result in a better environment for new programs to grow because they get better support services and flexibility. Moving to an athletic department setting could prove to be difficult because they will hold much less political power relative to other sports like football and basketball that dominate athletic departments.

Professionalization and Legitimacy Come with Rules. Existing outside the athletic department has its strengths because it affords flexibility for programs to start and grow. If adaptive sports want to become part of the NCAA, sacrifices will have to be made. If

professionalization and legitimacy is what is being pursued, particularly through the NCAA, adaptive sports must be ready to adapt to the new rules.

Need a Clear Vision and Mission. As discussed earlier, regardless of what the end goal may be, there must be a consensus among all the adaptive sport programs at the collegiate level. If there is not a clear end goal in mind and programs are pursuing different agendas, it will compromise the growth of adaptive sport at the aggregate level. By joining forces together and collectively working to the same goal in an organized manner, more strategic steps can be taken to advance adaptive sport.

Is the Athletic Department Solely Business Oriented? Participants from group B are concerned about the dynamics that could exist in an athletic department as opposed to current organizational structures. One example is the perceived pressure on athletic performance superseding academic achievements of student athletes. As much as athletic departments are focused on successful athletic outcomes, they also place great importance on the academic success of their student athletes. This is because the NCAA does require minimum academic requirements for NCAA sports. There are also restrictions on the number of hours that athletes can train per week so that athletic pursuits do not interfere with academics. For athletic departments, athletic and academic success are not mutually exclusive.

What Happens to Current Funding and Scholarships? Adaptive sport programs must find out what happens to their current funding sources and scholarships if they move to the athletic department. Questions that must be considered are, can they still receive grant money and donations, will they be able to continue accessing scholarship money through the disability resource center and what would the operating budget be like in the athletic department compared to their current budget.

Athletic Department Obligations. The following points mostly impact athletic departments, senior leaders at schools and the NCAA.

More Institutions Need to Support Adaptive Sport. Athletic departments will be willing to support adaptive sports if other schools in the conference have those sports as well. That is because it is easier to schedule competitions given geographic proximity, it is cheaper to travel and intra-conference competition drives decision making in athletic departments. Therefore, for adaptive sports to grow at the collegiate level, there need to be more institutions with adaptive

sport programming within a conference. It will take key leaders on the conference committee to push such an initiative forward and will require top-down support from them.

Culture Within Athletic Departments Must Change. For adaptive sport and athletes to be successful in the athletic department setting, athletic departments must be more inclusive regarding disability. All the coaches and staff need to understand why adaptive sport is important and how they can contribute to an environment that is enabling for all athletes. The athletic department must also realize that even if they do not have an adaptive sport team, they may still have adaptive athletes or will in the future. This is why having someone on the leadership team that advocates for disability is imperative for equitable treatment of adaptive athletes and sport and to support new opportunities. It will take a voice at the leadership level that is able to bring that lived experience or knowledge set to drive positive change for adaptive athletes and sport in the athletic department.

Integration. There are many considerations that participants brought forward regarding integration of adaptive sports and athletes into athletic departments.

What Coaches Need to be Hired? If adaptive sports do become part of the athletic department, it must be discussed among adaptive sport programs and athletic departments as to which coaches will become part of the athletic department staff.

What is the Easiest Path for Integration? The easiest path for integration must be identified by all parties involved. This will be examined further in the “Integration Strategies” section, however, what this point is getting at is having stakeholders work together to find the simplest way to start integrating adaptive sports into existing competitions. Based on earlier themes and recommendations suggested by participants, the easiest path to start with is creating a more supportive system for athletes with a physical disability that either require no or minimal accommodation.

Must be of a Solution Mindset. All parties involved must be open-minded when drafting integration strategies for adaptive athletes or adaptive sports. There are “easy wins” that can be achieved if rules or policies are slightly modified. Particularly when looking to support adaptive athletes that do or are close to competing at an NCAA level. For example, lowering the starting height for high jump is a simple way of including Paralympic level high jumpers in existing NCAA track and field meets.

NGBs Should Facilitate Transition. NGBs and the USOPC should work with the NCAA and member schools to facilitate the transition to supporting adaptive sports. Ultimately the NGBs and USOPC understand best practices and will be able to guide athletic departments and the NCAA to create effective opportunities for athletes with disabilities.

Partner with Athletic Departments if they Cannot be Joined. If athletic departments cannot be joined that does not eliminate the possibility of partnership. There are a lot of non-monetary resources that athletic departments can offer to adaptive sport programs to help them grow. For example, assisting with facility access for practices and competition, providing access to apparel contracts with sponsors and advertising adaptive sport events through their campus media channels.

Athletic Department Criteria

The athletic department has certain criteria that they look for when deciding which teams become varsity sports. This can help provide a framework for how adaptive sports should look to grow in the future regardless if becoming a varsity sport is the end goal because it will help with long term success and institutional support.

Revenue Generation. An athletic department will look upon a sport favorably if it can generate revenue for the athletic department. However, most athletic departments only have one or two sports, typically football and basketball, which are true revenue generators. All other sports typically have expenses that far outweigh any revenue they bring in. As a result, and contrary to external perception, there are other important factors that athletic departments look for in varsity sports.

Critical Mass. Critical mass (high participation numbers) is essential for a successful varsity sport. That is because it signifies a large recruitment pool of athletes, there is a greater number of high quality athletes to select from (based on a normal distribution), there is competition at the conference level and there are athletes to support a sustainable performance year after year.

Brand/Image of University. When deciding on which sports become varsity, it is important for universities to consider what that program means for their brand as a school. For example, University of Michigan is known for its swimming program and Clemson University is known for its football program. This plays a role when athletic departments decide how to

allocate funds. Adaptive sport could be an asset for athletic departments because supporting an adaptive sport would start to build the school's reputation as inclusive.

Popularity of Sport. Athletic departments will consider the popularity of the sport in their geographic region, at their school and in the conference. If a sport naturally draws big crowds or devoted fan support, there is an incentive to make it a varsity sport. If the sport is popular in the geographic region, it is also a likely indicator that the sport is common at the youth level and there is a strong recruitment base for that sport in the region. The popularity of the sport is another way an institution can build its brand. However, if a sport is unpopular in that particular area, the athletic department is much less likely to support it.

Title IX. Title IX plays a critical role in all decisions that the athletic department makes because of the repercussions for not being compliant. Therefore, decisions regarding team sports are very difficult because adding a male team sport heavily skews the Title IX numbers with regards to proportionality of sport opportunities per gender based on university enrollment. However, a potential opportunity for adaptive sport is looking for ways to integrate individual athletes onto existing teams (e.g. track and field) or making team sports coed (e.g. wheelchair basketball).

Interest of Those in Power. The theme of key individuals comes up again here because ultimately decisions come down to those in power to make decisions. Therefore, it is crucial for any sport looking to become part of the athletic department to build a relationship with senior leadership. These people include the President, Deans, Chancellors, Athletic Directors, Senior Woman Administrators and others.

Expense of the Program. Athletic departments will look at the expenses of the sport to determine if they can be supported or not. This includes facility usage, equipment, travel costs and miscellaneous expenses. This point is relevant to the next one about "Competition in Conference".

Competition in Conference. Athletic departments will base their decisions on what sports they will support based on what others do in the conference. At conference committee meetings, if members do not decide to support a sport, then it will not be a varsity sport. Therefore, it is important to not just build relationships with a single athletic department, but with multiple in the same conference. This emphasizes the importance of adaptive sport programs to work together to build relationships in a coordinated way.

Group B: Money, Revenue Generation and Critical Mass. Group B participants gave heavy weight to money, revenue generation and critical mass as the key criteria that athletic departments look for. However, it is evident that the criteria is much more holistic than that. It is necessary for this stakeholder group to understand that it will likely take three things in addition to critical mass to build a stronger case to get athletic department support. First, support and popularity in the school community. Second, a clear value proposition for athletic departments as to the add-value that adaptive sports brings to the institution. Third, a coordinated effort with other adaptive sport programs in the geographic area.

Group C. Participants from Group C had several other key factors they take into consideration when deciding which sports will be varsity sports at their institution.

COVID-19. Group C made many references to COVID-19 in their responses about athletic department decisions. During this time and in the near future, budgets are becoming smaller and schools are making drastic cuts to their athletic programs. This makes it an inopportune time for adaptive sports to become varsity. A key contributor to the financial strain on athletic departments is the possibility that college football may not take place this upcoming season. For Division 1 schools, athletic departments rely on their top tier football teams to bring in money for the athletic department.

Undergraduate Admissions. Athletic departments and institutions pay attention to the correlation of certain sports to undergraduate admissions. While a sport may not bring in direct revenue (e.g. ticket sales), if it attracts more people to the school that pay tuition, it is still a benefit for the school. This is where a potential advantage exists for adaptive sport. If athletic departments and institutions can brand themselves as inclusive, open-minded, and accessible, they can potentially attract more students with disabilities who may have otherwise not attended that institution.

Success of the Program. Athletic departments will favor sports that have achieved athletic success in the past and are likely to have future success. Sports must be able to prove they are competitive, have a sustainable program, and have been successful in the past.

New Funding Sources. Athletic departments also look for new funding or donor sources that they can leverage through their varsity sports. This creates another potential advantage for adaptive sport because of the new funding sources they can bring with them to athletic departments. For example, there are a lot of endowment funds and charities in the United States

that support people with physical disabilities like the “Click” endowment fund that supports the University of Arizona and the Adam Miller Memorial Fund based out of Michigan (Finley, 2019; University of Michigan Services For Students with Disabilities, 2020).

Homogenization of Conferences. This builds off the point made earlier about “Competition in Conference”. Schools within a conference tend to carry the same sports and follow initiatives set by their conference. Therefore, if adaptive sport is going to become varsity, it must persuade and convince a majority of committee members within a given conference. It also means that conference led initiatives, like the ECAC Inclusive Sport Initiative, could have the greatest impact at growing collegiate adaptive sport at the NCAA level.

History of School. Similar to the point made about a school’s brand or reputation, the history of a school plays a role in deciding which sports stay in the athletic department. If a school has a long history of supporting a sport and it is part of their culture, then more effort will be made to support it.

Facility Usage/Resource Requirements. Athletic departments will also look at the resource requirements a sport needs to determine if it can be supported. For example, a sport like STUNT that was discussed in the background is easy to support because it uses existing gym space at the institution, they compete at off-peak times, and minimal equipment is required.

Integration Strategies for Collegiate Adaptive Sport in the NCAA

This category mainly addresses participants perceptions of the ECAC Inclusive Sport Initiative and the Four Principles of Sport Inclusion that were presented in the background. Based on participant responses, two key findings were apparent with regard to implementing the Four Principles of Sport Inclusion as integration strategies for adaptive athletes and sport into existing sport infrastructure. First, participants agreed that principles 1 through 3 are practical and could be achieved in the short-term. To summarize, this would involve including student athletes with physical disabilities that require no or minimal rule adaptations (e.g. the inclusion of an athlete that uses a prosthetic or lowering the starting height for high-jump to include elite level adaptive jumpers) and the addition of events to existing sport competitions (e.g. adding a 400m wheelchair track trace to a NCAA track and field meet). Second, participants identified that the inclusion of team sports will be more difficult and will require the NCAA to make some policy changes that eliminate structural barriers and for wheelchair basketball to implement new strategies to grow their participation levels. This section will further discuss the comments and

considerations participants had about the Four Principles of Sport Inclusion and their implementation. It will also discuss the potential strategies that wheelchair basketball could use to grow the sport at the collegiate level.

Four Principles of Sport Inclusion

Practical and Feasible. All stakeholder groups agreed that the four principles of sport inclusion put forward by the ECAC inclusive sport initiative were practical and could be accomplished. However, compared to others, principle 4 (team sports) had more concerns regarding how it could be accomplished and was rated as the most difficult to accomplish.

Education is Critical. Noticeable feedback about the different principles of sport inclusion was that if they are going to be successful, athletic departments, conference organizers and the NCAA must be educated more about adaptive sport. Common feedback from participants in Group C was that after learning how each principle is implemented and how inclusion can be done using different strategies, the concept of inclusive sport made a lot more sense to them. This is likely because the leaders in the NCAA, the conferences and member institutions have limited exposure to and knowledge about adaptive sport. Therefore, it is critical that adaptive sport leaders work to educate athletic department staff as to how adaptive sport can be integrated into existing events. At the same time, athletic departments must be open-minded about the integration strategies put forward. The more tangible and the more practical the integration strategies are made, the easier the adoption will be into mainstream sport events.

How Can Recruitment Be Improved? Stakeholder groups recognized that there have been and are student athletes with physical disabilities that compete at the NCAA level. If a more purposeful approach is taken to support inclusion principles 1 and 2, stakeholders agreed that recruitment must be improved at all stages of the athlete development pipeline. Suggestions were made that a partnership with the USOPC could help because they could provide resources and information on how to recruit and train adaptive athletes.

How Will Implementation Work? All stakeholder groups had questions regarding how implementation of the different sport principles would work. Two things would have to be done. First, consult with the ECAC to identify best practices from their inclusive sport model. Second, do a sport by sport analysis to understand how each one can be implemented by consulting with adaptive sport coaches, national governing sport bodies and or the USOPC. After the operational logistics have been figured out, scoring for adaptive sport events must be addressed.

Stakeholders must decide if and how points will be awarded in events like track and field or tennis for adaptive sport competitors, or if they start off as exhibition events until more schools have adaptive athletes. At this point it is important to recall the McFadden and Badgett cases from the background. By not awarding points for their events, the high school athletic associations were devaluing their participation. Furthermore, it could be argued that unless adaptive athletes can earn points for their school, institutions would be less incentivized to support adaptive athletes. Another consideration is how adaptive athletes and sport could be integrated into Director's Cup scoring and standings to incentivize institutional support (refer to Appendix E).

Principles 1 and 2. For principles 1 and 2, no new events or competitions need to be made as athletes with physical disabilities can compete in existing events and competitions. Something that must be taken into consideration is if minor rule adaptations are used to include student athletes with disabilities in events, will it alter the timing or length of the event? This is an important factor to consider for track and field events where schedules are highly coordinated and time sensitive. However, it is not a reason to not make the rule accommodation, it just implies that organizers must consult the appropriate leaders to ensure there are no schedule conflicts. For example, if the opening height for high-jump is lowered to include high-level Paralympic eligible high jumpers, then it must be understood that there will have to be one extra round of jumping added to that competition.

Principle 3. Similar considerations for scheduling must be made for principle 3 as this involves the addition of events or heats to existing competitions. For a sport like wheelchair track, it should be discussed as to how many events and which events will be initially included in existing NCAA meets to make integration as easy as possible. Perhaps the best way to start is the addition of a couple events that are the most popular in wheelchair track for a trial period.

Another factor that must be taken into account is how these additional events count toward team totals in NCAA competitions. For example, in NCAA D1 tennis, schools compete against each other in a head-to-head format where points are awarded for singles and doubles matches. If wheelchair tennis were added as a singles match (where wheelchair tennis athletes play against each other), how does the outcome of that match affect the total points for their team? Furthermore, what if the other team does not have a wheelchair tennis athlete, does that count as a forfeit? Another consideration is that wheelchair tennis athletes can play against able-

bodied athletes. In this instance, the wheelchair tennis athlete is allowed two bounces on their side of the court as opposed to one. For this to be effective, the USTA would have to be involved to match wheelchair tennis athletes with opponents that would be of the right skill level. In this case, wheelchair tennis could fare better at a D3 or D2 level.

In a hypothetical situation suggested by participants, perhaps wheelchair tennis is added as an exhibition event in NCAA tennis for the first five years in a conference that has existing programs. This would allow other schools a period of fixed time to recruit and support a wheelchair tennis athlete. Then after the five-year period, the wheelchair tennis athletes contribute points to their respective schools and if a school doesn't have a wheelchair tennis athlete they forfeit that individual match. Drawing upon the McFadden case in the background, the state high school athletic association used a rule that at least 40 percent of schools must have an athlete in a given event for it to be fair for team point allocation. Using an NCAA example, if the SEC took on such an initiative, 6 schools would have to field wheelchair tennis athletes. From a numbers perspective that is feasible to do and from an operations perspective all it would require is the addition of 1 or 2 wheelchair athletes to existing varsity teams and a wheelchair tennis coach. However, it then must be addressed how scholarship allocation would work and how that impacts team travel logistics.

Group A: K-12 Participation. Participants in Group A suggested that the best way to start such an initiative (implementing the ECAC four principles of sport inclusion) would be to start implementing some of these inclusion principles at the K to 12 level. This would establish proof of concept for the NCAA to use in other conferences at the NCAA level.

Group C. Participants in group C had a couple of other concerns and suggestions not apparent at the aggregate level.

Who Will Fund It? Participants in Group C had questions about where the money will come from to support an inclusive sport initiative in their conference. One possibility is new sponsorship opportunities as a result of supporting adaptive athletes and adaptive sports. However, participants did not provide specific examples. This topic should be examined further.

NCAA Resource Guide. Similar to the point made earlier about recruitment, participants in Group C suggested that the NCAA should provide a resource guide on how to recruit and support adaptive athletes. A resource guide could be an easy way for schools to learn how to most effectively be more inclusive for adaptive athletes as most do not have experience in

adaptive sport. The NCAA could consult the USOPC and NGBs to put together an informational resource guide that athletic departments could use.

Able-Body Inclusion

To support principle 4, the inclusion of team sports, participants suggested that a possible way to increase participation levels was through able-body inclusion in wheelchair basketball. Able-body inclusion was also one of the themes discussed as an opportunity for growth of adaptive sport at the collegiate level in an earlier section.

Able-Body Athletes Should Participate in Wheelchair Basketball. Almost all participants agreed that able-body athletes should be allowed to participate in wheelchair basketball for emerging collegiate programs. Additionally, most participants agreed that able-body athletes should be allowed to participate in collegiate wheelchair basketball permanently. There were several reasons why people supported able-body inclusion. First, wheelchair basketball is a competitive sport, so why not let everyone play to have the best competition possible. Second, it makes the sport inclusive because people of all physical abilities can play. Participants suggested that adaptive sport is being hypocritical if they are making a case to institutions to be included yet are excluding able-body athletes from the sport. Third, it increases participation numbers and creates opportunity. Some clubs or organizations may not have enough athletes with a disability to form a team, so including able-body athletes is the only way they can actually get an opportunity to play. It also allows siblings and friends who are able-bodied to play a sport with a relative or friend that has a disability. As a result, it increases the number of people playing the sport and the number of teams. Fourth, since all players have to sit in a wheelchair to play, it levels the playing field. Participants said that by looking at a wheelchair basketball chair as sporting equipment just as one would look at hockey skates, it changes one's perception of the sport. The sport chair is equipment that enables everyone to play and compete together. Furthermore, able-bodied athletes are assigned the highest classification in wheelchair basketball (refer to the background section on "Wheelchair Basketball"). Assigning able body-athletes the 4.5 classification creates an importance for having lower classification players on the team to field a full line up. Fifth, participants referred to Canada's domestic wheelchair basketball leagues that have had successful outcomes with able-body inclusion. Overall, participants recognized that able-body inclusion should be incorporated in wheelchair basketball to get to the critical mass required to grow the sport at the collegiate level.

Reasons Against Able Body Inclusion. Participants that were against able-body inclusion (5 participants in total) were from groups A and B. They had two main reasons as to why able-body athletes should not be included.

It Takes Away Opportunities. Participants shared that allowing able-body athletes to participate would take away opportunities from athletes with disabilities. Some went further to add that adaptive sport is not meant for people without disabilities. In light of these comments, participants in support of able-body inclusion had counter arguments in their responses. First, it will not take away opportunities if the opportunity does not exist to begin with. Allowing able-body athletes to participate gives the opportunity for new programs to be able to field a team. Second, the classification system in wheelchair basketball negates this concern because having an able-body athlete on the team necessitates having a lower classification player on the team. Third, if there is a concern about too many able-body athletes playing at the intercollegiate level, then a quota can be instituted in the rules that allows a maximum number of able-body athletes per team. Fourth, if there is concern about scholarship access for athletes with physical disabilities, then there could be a rule that able-body athletes are not eligible for scholarships that should be designated for athletes with a physical disability. Lastly, some participants also suggested that able-body athletes could be assigned a classification of 5.0, which would disincentivize teams from having more than a couple able-body athletes on their rosters because there are only 15 points allowed on the court at once. There are solutions to mitigate any possible negative impact that able-body inclusion could have. Speaking to a point made earlier, excluding able-body athletes from participation is potentially being hypocritical.

Not Needed. Four of the five people who responded that able-body athletes should not be included in intercollegiate wheelchair basketball in the long term stated that they were not needed. However, this does not take into consideration the greater number of athletes that are necessary to grow the competition at the intercollegiate level. However, if there is no ambition to grow the intercollegiate division and pursue varsity status, then there is no need for able-body inclusion.

Group C and D. There were no participants from Group C or D that thought able-body athletes should not participate in wheelchair basketball. Both groups stated that it would help with building a critical mass of athletes to grow the sport at the collegiate level.

Coed Team Sports

To support principle 4, the inclusion of team sports, it was proposed to participants that a possible way to increase participation levels in wheelchair basketball is to make the sport coed at the intercollegiate level. There are three reasons why this suggestion was put forward. First, it creates a larger pool of athletes for the intercollegiate wheelchair basketball division and could help grow the number of programs at the collegiate level. Second, the National Wheelchair Basketball Association already allows coed teams in the junior and adult divisions. Third, it makes it easier for teams to comply with their athletic department's Title IX numbers. Themes from participant's responses are below.

Coed Teams. Almost all participants agreed that emerging collegiate wheelchair basketball programs should be coed to help with the numbers required to field a team. However, participants were more split on whether established programs should continue to field a coed team. Most of the people who said no to long term coed programming were from group B. Below are some pros and cons provided for coed teams and some suggestions for implementation.

Pros. Similar to reasons provided in support of able-body inclusion, participants stated that coed teams would create more opportunities for people to participate in wheelchair basketball and would help create a critical mass of athletes to help grow the sport at the collegiate level. Participants also shared that there are a lot of female athletes that are just as good or better than male athletes of the same classification. Another advantage of making the sport coed is that it can be fully inclusive for those that identify as transgender. Lastly, having a single coed wheelchair basketball team is less expensive than fielding a men's and a women's team.

Cons. Similar to reasons provided against able-body inclusion, participants not in support of coed teams stated that it would take away opportunities for females and that more must be done to support the development of female athletes. Participants in support of coed teams countered that coed teams can be implemented in a way that still creates legitimate opportunities for females and will be discussed next.

Coed Considerations. Participants suggested the following implementation strategies for coed teams in intercollegiate wheelchair basketball.

Roster Quotas. Participants recommended that for coed to be effective for Title IX purposes and to support female athletes, rosters should reflect the proportionality that the athletic department has mandated for their school. For example, if the athletic department's Title IX numbers should be 50 percent female and 50 percent male (based on proportionality to enrollment), then the wheelchair basketball team should be an even split between genders (e.g. 6 females and 6 males). The same rule would apply for how teams divide up scholarship money for their athletes.

On-Court Quotas. Some participants recommended that for coed to be effective for developing female athletes, there should be a rule regarding the minimum number of females that should be on the court at all times. For example, having a rule that two females must be on the court at all times.

Coach Quotas. Some participants shared the importance of having female coaches is just as important as developing female athletes. It is also important if the team is coed to have someone in a leadership position that female and male athletes can relate to and that will advocate for them. Therefore, another rule could be implemented that requires coaching staff of coed teams to have at least one female coach.

Point Reduction Rule. As per National Wheelchair Basketball Association rules, in mixed gender competition, female athletes play with a one-point reduction to their classification to level the playing field. There are mixed sentiments with regard to this rule. Some participants were in support of it because they recognized that males are physiologically stronger than women. However, some participants shared that such a rule is not required because as stated earlier, some females are better than their male counter parts. They also stated that while men are physically stronger, the sport of wheelchair basketball is dominated by the tactical components which require intelligence, strategy and quick thinking.

Precedent. The key advantages of making wheelchair basketball coed is that it can increase the number of viable programs and it can make the teams Title IX compliant as per their athletic department's standards. This could help wheelchair basketball become a varsity sport because athletic departments would not have to be concerned about Title IX numbers and it is easier for them to support one team instead of two. Furthermore, there is precedent for coed NCAA sports. Rifle, skiing and fencing are all coed sports in the NCAA.

Institutions and Conferences

Participants were asked about institutions and conferences that could hypothetically make a difference in the current landscape of adaptive sport programming if they were to successfully institute some of the practices from the ECAC model.

Institutions. Participants shared that the top three institutions that could potentially make a big difference in the collegiate adaptive sport space given their current progress are the University of Alabama, University of Michigan, University of Illinois and Clemson University.

Conferences. Participants shared that the most likely conference that could successfully take on an inclusive sport initiative would be the Southeastern Conference (SEC), Big Ten Conference (Big 10), Pacific-12 Conference (PAC-12) or a smaller conference in D2 or D3. Participants that suggested a smaller conference could be better for an inclusive sport initiative hypothesized that larger conferences focus too much of their efforts on football or basketball. As a result, it creates an opportunity for a D2 or D3 conference to establish a unique identity by embracing inclusive sport.

Is Sport a Major Life Activity?

Almost all participants stated that they would define sport as a major life activity. Of the participants who said no, they considered that physical activity could be a major life activity because not everyone participates in sport. However, as discussed in the background, participants will have different perceptions as to whether sport could be a major life activity based on how they define sport. Several common themes were present in participant's answers as to why they would define sport as a major life activity.

Social Interaction

Participants agreed that sport could be a major life activity because it allows people to socially interact with each other. Sport can be a vehicle for individuals to build healthy relationships and be integrated with society. Participants shared that people are social beings and sport plays a significant role in facilitating and creating relationships.

Physical Health

Participants agreed that sport has physical health benefits and is essential for an individual's health. Participants stated that activities that lead to physical health should be a major life activity. Participants shared health benefits they experienced personally that positively

impacted their life such as musculoskeletal health, the strength to be able to perform essential daily tasks and weight maintenance/obesity prevention.

Mental Health

Participants agreed that there are mental health benefits associated with playing sport derived from the individual participation and social interaction. Mental health is an important part of an individual's life and considered as a major health component by participants.

Participants stated that if sport can bring about mental health benefits, then it should be a major life activity.

Improves Quality of Life

Building off earlier points, participants shared that sport makes people healthier physically, emotionally, socially and has a multitude of other benefits. As a result, participants state that sport should be a major life activity because it can improve an individual's quality of life.

Life Skills

Participants shared that in addition to the health benefits of sport, there are also a multitude of life skills that individuals acquire through participation in sport. Participants shared things like work ethic, determination, teamwork, persistence and organization. This supports the literature from the background about how sport develops transferrable skills that make people successful in life.

Group B: Access to Education

Participants in Group B shared that sport is a vehicle for their athletes to access education opportunities and that if it was not for sport, some of their athletes would not have attended post-secondary schools.

Group C: Physical Activity is a Major Life Activity

Participants in Group C were more undecided as to whether sport itself was a major life activity because not everyone plays sport. However, they were likely thinking of sport from a highly competitive and organized frame of reference. All the participants in Group C shared that physical activity could be a major life activity because of the themes presented earlier about physical, social and mental health benefits.

Group D

Gives Life Purpose. Participants in Group D shared that sport gives people a purpose in life. It gives them something to look forward to, something to give them an identity, it makes people healthy, people can forge lasting relationships through sport and it develops self-efficacy. Therefore, if it can have such a profound impact on an individual's life, Group D participants believe it must be a major life activity.

Experiences Through Sport. Participants in Group D also shared that sport is a vehicle through which one can have formative experiences in life. For example, build life-long relationships with people, attend university or college, travel the world and develop one's identity.

Recommendations Based on Key Themes

Based on the major recurring themes in the discussion section, there are several recommendations that are listed below.

K to 12 Programming

Collegiate adaptive sport programs should work with national governing sport bodies and their local schools to create programs for elementary and high schools. This could include anything from school visits, demonstrations, week-long immersive programming, an adaptive sport curriculum for physical education and health teachers, to high school athletic competitions. The ultimate goal of increasing K to 12 programming is to educate people about disability and adaptive sport, promote physical activity that can be inclusive for everyone and get more people excited about and involved in adaptive sport. What this can lead to is a more effective and efficient way of increasing awareness about adaptive sport opportunities and participation in adaptive sport. This could result in a more effective and integrated development pathway that facilitates greater participation in adaptive sport at the collegiate level and build critical mass.

Educate Upper Administration

Presidents, Deans, Chancellors, Athletic Directors, Associate Athletic Directors, Athletics Coaches and Recreation and Fitness Directors must make a commitment to educating themselves about disability and adaptive sport. Even if their school may not have an adaptive sport program, they still might have or will have student athletes with physical disabilities. A barrier identified in this study is that key leaders at institutions are unfamiliar with adaptive athletes and sport. The unfamiliarity with the topic can make people less willing to create those

opportunities because they may be unsure of what to do. So just as it should be their responsibility as leaders to be open minded, adaptive sport leaders must also proactively reach out to these people in positions of influence to educate them. An example of this is one participant who had staff at their school try an adaptive sport so they could experience it for themselves and gain a new perspective on adaptive sport.

NCAA Resource Guide: Adaptive Athlete Recruitment and Training

To facilitate an increase in opportunities for adaptive athletes at the NCAA level, the NCAA should invest in creating resource guides for recruiting and training student athletes with a physical disability that require minimal accommodation. This is the “low-hanging fruit” as described by participants in this study because these athletes already exist in the NCAA. The next step is to create a better pathway to ensure these student athletes are being given the support they need to attain athletic and academic success. The NCAA could partner with the USOPC or with specific national governing sport bodies to create a recruitment and training resource guide.

Emerging Adaptive Sports Program

The NCAA should work with adaptive sport leaders to come up with an emerging sport strategy for adaptive sport similar to what is currently in place for female athletics. This study supports the results from the study done by Larkin et al. (2014) in that such an emerging sport program would be beneficial to facilitate the growth of adaptive sport.

Senior Disability/Inclusion Administrator

Participants, particularly in Group A, B, and D spoke to the value that would come of having representational leadership advocating for disability in the Athletic Department. Just as there is a Senior Woman Administrator designation, there should be one for disability as well, or at least for inclusion in general. The reason why such a leadership role is important is because it gives a voice to the underrepresented, it adds value to the decisions that are made at the highest level because of the diversity in thought, and it can lead to equitable outcomes for student athletes with physical disabilities.

New Adaptive Sport Programs in Existing Conferences

Athletic departments are driven by decisions made at the conference level. They are more likely to support a sport if many other schools in their conference also compete in it. Therefore, for adaptive sports to have a better chance at being sponsored by a conference, whether that is tennis, track, swimming or basketball, there needs to be more schools that support that sport

within a given conference. As more people look to start adaptive sport programs at the collegiate level, they should focus on schools that are geographically close to other adaptive sport programs. The two conferences that should be targeted for new programs are the Big 10 and the SEC because there are adaptive sport programs that already exist within these conferences and programs in close geographic proximity to them (e.g. Clemson University and University of Texas-Arlington are both close to the SEC and have adaptive sports programs).

Conference Driven Strategies and Inclusive Sport Principles 1 Through 3

Most participants agreed that principles 1 through 3 from the ECAC Inclusive Sport Initiative were practical and could be accomplished. The leaders and individuals who worked on the ECAC Inclusive Sport Initiative should work with the NCAA to produce resources and materials so more NCAA schools can implement principles 1 and 2 at their schools since these athletes require no or little accommodation. The leaders from the ECAC Inclusive sport initiative should work with the NCAA and the appropriate national governing sport body to identify the most suitable sport for principle 3 and a conference that could host such an event. Likely candidates for principle 3 based on participant responses could be wheelchair track or wheelchair tennis. Overall, participants indicated that the most promising strategy to support the growth of adaptive sport at the collegiate level would be conference led initiatives such as the ECAC Inclusive Sport Initiative.

Able-Body Inclusion

The collegiate wheelchair basketball division should include able-body athletes in the sport for all teams, not just emerging programs. It will help with participation numbers, grow the game at the collegiate level and make the sport inclusive. A quota can be placed on the number of able-body athletes a team can have to mitigate concerns about opportunities being taken away from athletes with a physical disability. A rule can also be put in place that does not allow able-body athletes to receive scholarships intended for athletes with physical disabilities. Able-body participation will be required to generate a critical mass of participants at the collegiate level.

Coed Teams

The collegiate wheelchair basketball teams should consider making their teams coed. It costs less to operate a wheelchair basketball program, it makes it easier to field a team, it makes it easier as a collective to reach critical mass in the intercollegiate division, it is easier to become a varsity sport if there is the right ratio of females to males, and its fully inclusive for all genders.

Rules that could be put in place to mitigate concerns about not supporting female athletic opportunities include a proportionality rule for the roster (e.g. 6 women and 6 men), at least two females must be on the court at all times, and at least one coach on the team must be female.

Adaptive Sports Should Work Towards Varsity and NCAA Status for the Future

In the short-term, adaptive sport programs should remain outside of athletic departments because it affords them the flexibility to grow. In the long-term it could be beneficial for adaptive sports to become varsity and NCAA sports because it could serve to legitimize the sport, dismantle perceptions about disability in society, and grow the participation in and support of adaptive sport. To achieve varsity status, adaptive sports must examine the different considerations presented in this study, such as building a critical mass of athletes, cultivating relationships with senior leaders, building support and popularity in the local community, and following the rules more closely that are set by the NCAA and athletic departments. Regardless of whether NCAA status is ultimately achieved, the considerations put forward in the discussion could help collegiate adaptive sport grow and be more sustainable in the future.

Major Life Activity

Based on the background and the results from this study, there could be an opportunity to push for the interpretation of major life activity to include sport. It is arguably of great significance in an individual's life and most people participate in some form of sport. A potential next step would be to compile more data on the research question to get a larger number of responses. If there is significant support for sport as a major life activity, the Office of Civil Rights could be approached with the data with the intention that they would release a new Dear Colleague Letter that provides an interpretation on major life activity to include sport. Such an end result is hypothetical and is highly dependent on government ideology and policy at the given time, but the potential end result makes this topic worth looking into further.

Part VI. Limitations

This section will discuss the limitations of this study.

Underrepresentation from Stakeholder Group A

Understanding the perspectives from collegiate level adaptive athletes is essential for making future progress in adaptive sport because they have the lived experience of being a person, student and athlete with a disability. Adaptive athletes are the people who grew up in the educational system and had a first-hand experience of what supported them and limited them in

their journey. For this study there were only 3 participants from stakeholder group A. While their participation provided unique insights and recommendations, there were too few participants to have a good sample from this demographic.

Overrepresentation from Stakeholder Group B (Relative to Other Groups)

Relative to other groups, there was an overrepresentation of participants from stakeholder group B when examining aggregate level results. The number of participants from each group, A through D, were 3, 21, 8 and 6 respectively. While the number of participants in group B made for good quality results when looking at that group individually, the results at the aggregate level were skewed in favor of responses given by group B.

No Representation from Stakeholder Group E

The NCAA is an important stakeholder in this research because the end decision to support adaptive sport will come from them. They hold the power to implement some of the initiatives that were discussed in this study. Additionally, they may have a very different point of view compared to other stakeholders as to which initiatives would be more effective and how to implement them. Members of the NCAA Office for Diversity and Inclusion were contacted to participate in this study, however no responses were received. This places a limitation on the results because a key stakeholder group did not participate.

Overrepresentation from Division 1 Schools

This study had an overrepresentation of participants from Division 1 schools. 26 of the 38 participants were from D1 schools so the results and findings are skewed towards their perspectives. If more participants participated from D2 and D3 schools, there could have been different results.

Coding List

The key word list that was used to determine frequency of key words in the first stage of analysis may not have captured all significant key words effectively. The codes used for the coding process was developed through the themes that were present in the literature review. However, every individual will have a unique interpretation of the literature and therefore potentially come up with a slightly different list.

Interpretation of Themes

The transcribed interviews were edited to highlight common key words that were shared in the treemaps of each stakeholder group for those particular questions (Refer to Part III). Then, the transcripts were manually read through to determine thematic answers based on how the highlighted words were used in the transcribed text. For example, in Question 1, participant 23 answered, “to recruit those student athletes in this realm of things, we have to start with those youth leagues and the high school leagues in providing that opportunity to students with a disability”. In the example provided, the words “we have”, “opportunity” and “disability” would be highlighted based on the results from the treemap. A thematic answer that is derived from that statement is “Increase K-12 Participation”. However, that statement provided by participant 23 could have been interpreted differently and thus would have resulted in different findings or differently ranked themes in the results.

Non-Responses for Questions

Some participants did not provide an answer for some questions in their interview. This was a result of the participant not knowing how to answer, not wanting to answer, or not having enough time. As a result, there are some responses that were missing in the analysis which could have changed the results.

No Representation or Underrepresentation from Certain Adaptive Sports

In this study, there were 13, 4, 2 and 1 participants that were directly affiliated with (as a coach or athlete) wheelchair basketball, wheelchair tennis, wheelchair rugby and wheelchair track respectively. In this study there were 11 participants that worked with adaptive sport programs at the collegiate level (In an administrator or director position that worked with all sports in their given program). As a result, a limitation is that some sports like para-swimming was not represented at all in this study and there was underrepresentation from sports like wheelchair track relative to wheelchair basketball.

Selection of Key Themes and Findings

Based on the dashboards that were created, the key themes that were presented in the discussion were among the top 3 to 5 themes for that given category. However, those may not have been the most important themes just because they had the highest frequency of appearance in participant responses. Furthermore, no statistical tests were conducted to determine significance of any themes presented in the discussion.

Part VII. Future Research

This section will discuss recommendations for future research based on the results and findings.

K-12 Programming

A recurring theme in the results from this study is that investment in K to 12 programming in adaptive sport could be effective for changing cultural perceptions of disability and adaptive sport as well as increasing participation levels. It is recommended to examine this topic further to understand what kind of programming could be most effective, to understand current social perceptions of disability and adaptive sport, and do a longitudinal study to determine what effects K to 12 programming has on students. The goal of this future research would be to understand if there is a more cohesive and integrated path that could be developed to support the participation in inclusive sport opportunities and grow the participation base in adaptive sport.

Perceptions of Able-Body Participation

Able-body participation was identified as an opportunity for adaptive sport to grow at the collegiate level. Based on the lack of representation in this study, it would be important to understand adaptive athletes' perspectives on able-body inclusion. If the athletes themselves do not have a problem with it, then there should not be a reason for excluding able-body athletes from adaptive sport. Furthermore, it would be valuable to understand if this perception of able-body participation changes with the degree or level of competition (e.g. junior, recreational, collegiate, division 3 adult, division 2 adult and division 1 adult in the National Wheelchair Basketball Association).

Emerging Sports Program: What is the Right Number of Sponsors?

The recommendation by Larkin et al. (2014) is supported by the results of this study that an emerging adaptive sports program would be beneficial for the growth of adaptive sport at the collegiate level. However, further work should be done to determine an appropriate number of sponsors that would be required for an emerging adaptive sports program. Currently, to join the program, a women's sport must have at least 20 sponsors. However, the female population is far larger than the persons with a disability population, and the persons with a disability population is faced with more structural barriers to participate in sport. Therefore, for such a program to be

effective, competitive, and worthwhile for the NCAA, member conferences, and institutions, it should be determined what an appropriate number of sponsors should be.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiatives and their Impact in Athletic Departments

Participants responded that a senior disability or inclusion administrator would be beneficial for the athletic department to have. It is recommended to do qualitative research with athletic departments to determine if a designation that captures all areas of inclusion or a designation for each identified area of inclusion would be better. Furthermore, it should be investigated as to whether this should be an actual position in the athletic department office or just a designation.

Value-Add of Existing Adaptive Sport Programs at Colleges

For adaptive sport programs to appeal to key leaders of institutions and organizations to be included and supported, they must be able to present the add-value that they bring to the institution. Some themes were discussed in this study, like the brand or reputation of the school, undergraduate admissions, and new donor networks. However, further research should be done on existing adaptive sport programs at colleges and universities to understand the qualitative and quantitative impact they had on their institution. This could then be used to approach institutions and organizations as a competitive advantage they could gain by supporting adaptive sports.

Major Life Activity

The results from this study suggest that it is worth doing further research on the topic of major life activity. Future research should examine whether it could be proven with significance that people would define sport as a major life activity. If there is a strong enough case for major life activity to be interpreted as including sport, activists and advocates should approach the Office of Civil Rights with these findings.

Experiences of Athletes on Coed Teams

To further examine the possibility of making adaptive team sports coed at the collegiate level, it is recommended to study the experiences of adaptive athletes on coed teams to fully understand the social dynamics at play. This would help weigh the pros and cons more effectively before making a decision.

Key Leader Perceptions of Physical Disability

Presented multiple times in this study, and as per the critical change factor model (Fay, 1999), people in leadership positions have a lot of power and influence. If these people, Presidents, Deans, Chancellors, Athletic Directors, want something done, they have great control over the outcome. Therefore, it is necessary for adaptive sport leaders and programs to have a relationship with these individuals. However, to better cultivate this relationship and garner their support, it must be understood how they perceive adaptive sport and physical disability. This would provide a better starting point for understanding how to make progress.

Part VIII. Conclusion

The adaptive sport landscape at the collegiate level in the United States is complex and involves a lot of different stakeholder groups with different accountability relationships and interests. This study examined some of the key factors that shape this landscape and provide context for the current state of collegiate adaptive athletics.

The pervasiveness of Title IX in collegiate athletics demonstrates the effect that robust laws can have to address issues of equity. The Rehabilitation Act and ADA are on the cusp of having a similar impact on how institutions and organizations support adaptive sport, but have yet to have the same binding effect that Title IX has had for female sports. However, the Dear Colleague Letter from 2013 that provided recommendations for how to support inclusive sport opportunities provided the groundwork for the ECAC Inclusive Sport Initiative and their Four Principles of Sport Inclusion.

When examining issues of inequity, it is necessary to look to governing organizations to understand their role in creating, maintaining, or dismantling the inequity that exists. The NCAA as a governing organization of collegiate athletics in the United States has legitimacy rooted in pragmatic, moral, and cognitive paradigms. The NCAA will remain a legitimate organization as long as it maintains those sources of legitimacy in the eyes of the population it governs. Pragmatic and moral legitimacy are linked to normative values of the governed population and because they are based upon what is perceived as “the right thing to do” they are more unstable. This is because “the right thing to do” is transient in nature and as society and social issues evolve over time those normative values change. If the normative values amongst those in the NCAA shift, especially because of the interconnected nature of the NCAA and its member driven initiatives, the NCAA must evolve to maintain its legitimacy. If greater advancements like

the ECAC Inclusive Sport Initiative can be made, more conferences, committees, and institutions start to support adaptive sport, it would force the NCAA to be more supportive of adaptive athletes and sport.

The female narrative in NCAA sport is important to understand for several reasons when examining adaptive sport. Just as sport was constructed as a hyper-masculine domain that was discriminatory to female participation, one must understand how that creates an ableist culture in sport as well. Once the inequities that women faced in sport were acknowledged as rooted in hegemony and subordination, greater progress was made in female sport. This is because it was recognized that to support structurally marginalized groups new support systems and policies would have to be mandated. As a result, initiatives taken by the NCAA like the Gender Equity Task Force, the Emerging Sports for Women program and the creation of the Senior Woman Administrator designation have all been effective in working to rectify inequities in the domain of collegiate sports. Drawing upon those initiatives and the fundamental reason why they exist, adaptive athletes could benefit from similar support from the NCAA and its member institutions.

A number of themes and recommendations were made as a result of the qualitative interviews completed with stakeholders involved in collegiate adaptive sport. These include suggestions like K to 12 programming, able-body inclusion, a senior disability or inclusion administrator and more. However, at the core of the themes that were discussed and the recommendations that were made, this study will introduce a concluding concept of “coopetition” that can capture the essence of what has been communicated. Coopetition is defined as the collaboration among competitors for mutually beneficial results, but it represents much more than that (Kenton, 2020). On the surface, there are many stakeholders that are competing with each other for a finite pool of resources. For progress to be made, for mutual benefit to be enjoyed, and for collegiate sport to advance to a new level of inclusion, cooperation must be embraced by all. Coopetition involves the “bringing together” of leaders and stakeholders to share and leverage resources whether they are monetary, information, people, experience, or technology. Only by working together and leveraging each other’s strengths will adaptive sport break through and have success at the collegiate level. For example, looking at something like the ECAC Inclusive Sport Initiative involves getting the NCAA, the conference, committee members, member institutions, coaches, adaptive sport leaders, national governing sport bodies, and more all on the “same page” to make it happen. Everybody plays a part in the

success and the result is a bigger “pie” for everyone to enjoy. The NCAA has a stronger claim to its legitimacy, member institutions have new sports that they can excel in, adaptive athletes get the equity they deserve, universities become more diverse, more people are getting post-secondary education, and the list goes on. At the end of it all, by leveraging existing networks and cooperating together, new and greater success can be achieved for everyone.

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Appendix

Appendix A: ECAC Inclusive Sport Initiative

Retrieved from: https://ecacsports.com/news/2016/2/23/2_23_2016_36.aspx?

ECAC Announces Forward Movement for Inclusive Sport Initiative

 2/23/2016 12:00:00 AM

DANBURY, Conn. – The Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC) has announced plans to move forward with its Inclusive Sport Initiative offering an adaptive demonstration at the 2016 ECAC Open Swimming and Diving Championship on Saturday, Feb. 27 at the United States Naval Academy.

The ECAC, in collaboration with U.S. Paralympics, a division of the United States Olympic Committee, will be hosting two men's and two women's Paralympic swimming demonstration events (100-meter freestyle and 100-meter backstroke) featuring Paralympic athletes.

Schedule of events:

100 yard freestyle - Saturday, Feb. 27 @ 9:50 am (immediately preceding the morning trials session)

100 yard backstroke - Saturday, Feb. 27 @ 5:50 PM (immediately preceding the evening finals session)

There will be representation from the U.S. Paralympics division of the USOC to support the ECAC Inclusive Sport Initiative including Paul Ackerman, Associate Director for Paralympic Partnerships and Queenie Nichols, U.S. Paralympics High Performance Director for Swimming.


These demonstration events are part of the implementation strategy related to the ECAC's broader Inclusive Sport Initiative, and are envisioned to be a precursor to adding new championship events in the future.

A similar demonstration will be held at the 2016 ECAC/IC4A Division I Track & Field Championships in Princeton, N.J. in May in a number of Para-track & field events. Like swimming, it is expected that these track & field events will be added to these championships as new events, thus providing new and expanded opportunities for student-athletes within intercollegiate varsity sports.

In January 2015, ECAC Board of Directors proactively responded to the guidance presented in the OCR Dear Colleague Letter of January 2013 by adopting an inclusive sport strategy. This strategy is intended to provide new intercollegiate athletic opportunities for student-athletes with a variety of disabilities attending ECAC member colleges and universities in Divisions I, II and III. In taking this pioneering action, the ECAC will become the first conference to provide a range of options for students with disabilities to realize their dreams of competing as intercollegiate varsity athletes.

Appendix B: NCAA Core Areas of Inclusion: Disability

Retrieved from: <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/inclusion/student-athletes-disabilities>



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Student-Athletes with Disabilities

As one of its core values, the NCAA believes in and is committed to an inclusive culture that fosters equitable participation for student-athletes and career opportunities for coaches and administrators from diverse backgrounds. In further recognizing and acting upon this value, the NCAA is increasing efforts to provide opportunities to student-athletes with education-impacting and physical disabilities.

Education Impacting Disabilities

For academic eligibility purposes, the NCAA defines a disability as a current impairment that has a substantial educational impact on a student's academic performance and requires accommodation. [Learn more.](#)


Accommodations for Student-Athletes with Disabilities

The NCAA encourages participation by student-athletes with disabilities (physical or mental) in intercollegiate athletics and physical activities to the full extent of their interests and abilities. An NCAA member institution will have the right to seek, on behalf of any student-athlete with a disability participating on the member's team, a reasonable modification or accommodation of a playing rule, provided that the modification or accommodation would not:

- Compromise the safety of, or increase the risk of injury to, any other student-athlete;
- Change an essential element that would fundamentally alter the nature of the game; or
- Provide the student-athlete an unfair advantage over the other competitors.

Adaptive Sports Model

The NCAA continues to support the opportunity for student-athletes with disabilities to participate in intercollegiate athletics. In January 2014, the board of directors of the Eastern College Athletic Conference approved the implementation of championship sport opportunities for student-athletes with disabilities.



Resources

- [Active Policy Solutions - Disability Q&A](#)
- [2013 OCR Dear Colleague Letter](#)

Appendix C: List of Collegiate Adaptive Sport Programs in the United States (2016)
Retrieved from: <https://ablethrive.com/activities/21-colleges-adapted-sports-programs>

- **Auburn University**
 - wheelchair basketball, wheelchair tennis, accessible strength and cardio machines available, and handcycles for recreational use
- **Ball State**
 - power soccer and wheelchair basketball
- **Edinboro University**
 - men's and women's wheelchair basketball, Adaptive Intramural and Recreational Sports program includes swimming, bowling, exercise programs, and snow tubing
- **Indiana State University – Purdue University Fort Wayne**
 - wheelchair basketball
- **Michigan State**
 - recreational sports include adapted fitness centers, swimming, goalball, wheelchair tennis, wheelchair basketball, and wheelchair floor hockey
- **Ohio State**
 - adapted programs include aquatics, fitness classes, intramural sports, outdoor adventure (canoeing/kayaking/hiking/backpacking), indoor climbing, and personal training
- **Oregon State University**
 - club wheelchair basketball program
- **Penn State University**
 - Ability Athletics and Adaptive Club Activities include wheelchair basketball, Run, Walk & Roll races, seated volleyball, adapted soccer, Paralympic experience events, and sled hockey
- **Portland State University**
 - Inclusive Recreation program features an overnight ski trip, wheelchair basketball tournaments, adaptive climbing, adaptive swim, goalball, and an adapted gym
- **Southwest Minnesota State**
 - wheelchair basketball
- **Texas A&M**
 - wheelchair basketball, wheelchair football, wheelchair soccer, beep baseball, and sitting volleyball
- **UCLA**
 - wheelchair basketball, adaptive cycling, adaptive tennis, and warm water activities
- **University of Alabama**
 - wheelchair basketball and wheelchair tennis
- **University of Arizona**
 - Adaptive Athletics Program includes men's and women's wheelchair basketball, quad rugby, tennis, track and road racing, and hand-cycling
- **University of Central Florida**
 - wheelchair basketball, goalball, swim lessons, and a student assisted workout program with adaptive rock climbing
- **University of Illinois**
 - men's and women's wheelchair basketball with summer camp program available, and men's and women's wheelchair track
- **University of Missouri**
 - wheelchair basketball plus a team-fitness room with state of the art facilities for weight training and conditioning
- **University of New Hampshire – Northeast Passage**
 - sled hockey, quad rugby, and power soccer plus a wide variety of recreational sports including archery, court sports/Paralympic bocci, and cycling
- **University of Texas @ Arlington**
 - wheelchair basketball, wheelchair tennis, cycling, fitness, track & field, swimming, table tennis, and bocce ball.
- **University of Wisconsin Whitewater**
 - men's and women's wheelchair basketball and intramural sports including wheelchair basketball and football
- **Wright State University**
 - Adapted Recreation Program includes adapted aquatics, intramural football, soccer, basketball, and baseball

Appendix D: Interview Outline

Interview Questions

1. From your perspective, what changes would need to occur to increase participation levels in adaptive sports in the United States with a focus on the school (K-12) level and how that transcends to and manifests in post-secondary participation levels:
 - a. In society and culture?
 - b. Government policy (state and federal law)?
 - c. U.S sport governing bodies, systems and the development pathway?
2. Looking at adaptive sport in the United States at the collegiate level, based on your direct involvement and experiences, what are the current strengths and challenges? Why do they exist? If possible, speak to staffing, participation numbers, competition level, opportunities for development, funding, expenses, access to practice/competition facilities, recruitment, provision of housing, provision of medical support staff, etc.
3. Can you identify, based on your experiences, the initiatives supporting students and/or faculty with physical disabilities at your institution or an institution that you have worked with? Who took the lead to make it happen? Who had to be persuaded? What were the effects?
4. Do you think that the NCAA's inclusion strategy is fully and effectively meeting the needs of student-athletes? What about student-athletes with physical disabilities? Why? In what way are individual institutions involved in driving these strategies and initiatives? What would motivate or deter an institution to do so?
5. Apart from the direct stakeholders involved, the NCAA and the member institutions that athletes belong to, what other partners should be involved in progressing US collegiate adaptive sports? How would they be involved? What can they contribute? What difficulties would arise with their involvement? This can be at a community, state, national, corporate level, etc.
6. What do you see as optimal and attainable goals for collegiate adaptive sports in the future, including both short and long term? What would make collegiate programs and these goals scalable and sustainable? If possible, speak to the Four Principles of Sport Inclusion.
7. Is attaining varsity status and becoming affiliated with the athletic department a desirable goal for adaptive sports programs? What about NCAA sanctioning? If you are affiliated with a specific sport, how does that apply to your sport?
8. Are you familiar with the ECAC's Inclusive Sport Initiative in expanding some of its sport championships to provide greater accommodation to athletes with a disability (2015 – 2018)?

If so, what are your thoughts on the possibility of other NCAA sanctioned sport conferences or institutions using their model of Four Principles of Sport Inclusion to integrate student-athletes with physical disabilities?

Which NCAA sport conference would potentially be the best (most likely) to have future opportunities for athletes with a disability by adding events in conference sanctioned competitions, invitational events, and conference championships in select individual sports similar to the ECAC Inclusive Sport Initiative?

From your perspective, what individual colleges and/or universities along with their respective sport conferences would send the "strongest message to and have the largest influence on" their NCAA peer institutions to add a new varsity adaptive sport or sports through their own inclusion of new varsity opportunities for student-athletes with a disability?
9. What are your thoughts on able-bodied inclusion in adaptive sports? What about your sport in particular?
10. What is your opinion on mixed gendered rosters for team sports? Is this something collegiate adaptive team sports should adopt? Why or why not?

11. From an athletic department perspective, what do you think are the most important decision criteria or factors in determining what sports attain varsity status? What would be a motivating factor for athletic departments that would encourage integration of student-athletes with disabilities in current varsity teams, competitions, and events (based on the principles of sport inclusion)? What about the addition of team sports?

12. Most athletic departments of US colleges have Senior Woman Administrators. The senior woman administrator is the highest-ranking female in each NCAA athletics department or conference office. The purpose of the SWA designation is to promote meaningful representation of women in the leadership and management of college sports. Why are they important? Should institutions consider creating a similar position to advocate for student-athletes with a disability or diversity and inclusion in general on their respective campuses at a varsity and/or club sport level? Why or why not?

13. (A) A United States College was faced with a budget crunch. In response they demoted two varsity women's teams (gymnastics and volleyball) and men's teams (water polo and golf) to "donor-funded varsity status". These four sports were effectively removed from varsity level competition unless they could find donations to make up for the lost university funds. As a result, there was a litigation case against the College on grounds of gender inequality in sporting opportunities. Based on the already disproportionate numbers for male and female sports, the elimination of the women's teams reduced the participation opportunities for females in sport more than it did for men. The College argued against the litigation by focusing on the fact that opportunities were allocated fairly based on representative interest levels of each gender. For example, more men were interested in sports so there were more male focused sporting activities.

What are your thoughts on this passage?

(B) At the end of the case the court ruled in favor of the plaintiff (against the College) stating that "Interest and ability rarely develop in a vacuum; they evolve as a function of opportunity and experience"


What are your thoughts on this statement?

14. In a landmark Supreme Court decision that impacted the area of education and racial desegregation, the Court concluded "that in the field of public education the doctrine of separate but equal has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal". Considering that statement, most adapted athletic programs operate outside their respective institution's athletic department, what are your thoughts on this?

15. How would you define a major life activity? Is sport a major life activity, why?

Appendix E: Director's Cup
Retrieved From: <https://thedirectorscup.com/>

Tuesday, July 28th, 2020



Learfield/IMG College

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About

The crowning achievement in college athletics.

What
A program that honors institutions maintaining a broad-based program, achieving success in many sports, both men's and women's. Began in 1993-94 for Division I by NACDA and USA Today, it was expanded in 1995-96 to include Division II, III and the NAIA.

How
Each institution is awarded points in a pre-determined number of sports for men and women.

Who Wins
The overall champion is the institution that records the highest number of points in their division's Directors' Cup standings.

Award
The winner receives a crystal trophy.

Scoring Structure/Sports Included (Eff. 2017-18 academic year)