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The Failure of College Sport as an Equal Opportunity Employer

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The Failure of College Sport as an Equal Opportunity Employer

By Richard Lapchick
UCF Forum columnist
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As someone who has worked for institutions of higher education for more than four decades, it is especially embarrassing for me that colleges have the worst record in sports for hiring women and people of color.

UCF's Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport released the 2013 College Sport Racial and Gender Report Card this month. I had the privilege of co-authoring this report with April Johnson, Erika Loomer and Leslie Martinez, who are graduate students in the DeVos Sport Business Management Program.

At a time when there is so much news about all the changes in and challenges to college sports, there was even more distressing news in the report card. Leaders in college sport are clearly not providing equal opportunities for women and people of color. While that has always been the case, the opportunities for women have gotten substantially worse. That is difficult to absorb many years after the passage of Title IX.

College sport received a B for racial hiring practices by earning 82 points, up from 81 points in 2012. College sport received a C+ for gender-hiring practices by earning 76 points, significantly down from 81 points in 2012. The combined grade for 2013 was a C+ with 79 points, also significantly down from an overall B with 81 points in 2012.

This is the most distressing report card in many years. While it is good that colleges and universities' grades for race increased slightly, the drop in the gender grade highlights the voices of Title IX advocates who have been decrying the records of many institutions for years. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 protects people from discrimination based on sex in education programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance.

College sport still has the lowest grade for racial-hiring practices and only ranks higher than the National Football League for gender-hiring practices among all the college and pro sports covered by the Racial and Gender Report Cards.

The 2013 report featured several significant areas of concern. Whites continue to dominate the head coaching ranks on men's and women's teams, holding at least 85 percent of all head coaching positions in all three divisions and up to 92 percent of all head coaching positions in Division III.

I now ask athletics directors if they consider hiring a woman for a head or assistant coaching position on a men's team. They usually look at me like it is a crazy question. While it has been common practice for men to coach women's teams, it is rare for a woman to coach a men's team. Women held less than 40 percent of the head coaching jobs of women's teams across all three college divisions combined. Women also held less than 50 percent of the assistant coaching positions of women's teams in all divisions combined.

Rarely at a loss for words, athletic directors are usually silent when I say that after their reaction to my question about hiring a woman to coach a men's team. They also know that NBA champion San Antonio Spurs recently hiring a woman as an assistant coach puts them on notice.

Whites held the overwhelming percentage of positions of athletics directors in all three divisions during the 2012-13 year at 87 percent, 92 percent, and 94 percent in Divisions I, II, and III, respectively. Only 8.6 percent of Division I athletics directors are women.

So who is in the pipeline to take over? At the associate athletic director position, whites comprised 88 percent, 88 percent, and 94 percent of the total in Divisions I, II, and III, respectively. There is not much hope for change.

Is there a relation to the white maleness of our college coaches? The results can be seen in the coaching ranks. All Football Bowl Subdivision conference commissioners were white men in 2013. Looking at all Division I conferences, excluding historically black conferences, 29 of 30 commissioners are white.

Here are some highlights or in most cases, lowlights:

- Whites dominate the head coaching ranks on men's teams holding 86 percent, 88 percent, and 92 percent of all head coaching positions in Divisions I, II, and III, respectively.
- On the women's teams, whites held 85 percent, 88 percent, and 92 percent of all head coaching positions in Divisions I, II, and III.
- Forty-one years after the passage of Title IX, less than 40 percent of the head coaches of women's teams are women.

The results of the white maleness of our athletic director and associate AD leadership may also be seen in the other senior positions in college athletics.

The faculty athletics representative (FAR) is a key position as the liaison between the academic side and the athletics sides of the institution. Whites continue to fill the overwhelming majority of the FAR positions with 92 percent, 92 percent, and 94 percent of the total in Divisions I, II, and III.

White women continued to dominate the senior woman administrator position holding 83, 88, and 93 percent in Divisions I, II, and III.

The sports information director often dictates which athletes and coaches will get the media coverage. The SID is also overwhelmingly white in all three divisions with 95, 92, and 97 percent of the SID positions being held by whites in the three divisions. Women held 13, 10, and 13 percent of the SID positions in Divisions I, II, and III. A recent study from the Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport revealed that while "40 percent of all sports participants are female, they receive just 2-4 percent of all coverage and the emphasis is on their femininity vs. their athletic competence."

The record for athletics directors, coaches, senior athletic department staff and conference commissioners is completely unacceptable. In a future column, I will show why UCF athletics has been a leader in creating equal opportunities.

Richard E. Lapchick is the director of The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport at the University of Central Florida, which annually publishes racial and gender report cards on MLB, the NBA, WNBA, NFL, MLS, college sports, and the Associated Press Sports Editors. He also is chair of UCF's DeVos Sport Business Management program and is the author of 16 books that primarily focus on racial and gender issues and ethics

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