The purpose of this case is to highlight the tremendous potential for innovation that exists within the intercollegiate athletic model. While financial challenges make it difficult for many institutions to sponsor broad-based intercollegiate athletics programs, the intra-collegiate athletic model as instituted at BYU Idaho presents a design that can reduce expenditures and provide additional participation opportunities for education through athletics. This case could be used for a class discussing governance, administration, or financial issues in intercollegiate athletics. While there are tremendous benefits to the intra-collegiate athletic model, discussion of the case questions will also reveal the numerous benefits of the traditional model of intercollegiate athletics that may be sacrificed if an institution chose to discontinue its current athletics offerings. An in-depth discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of both forms of college sport will provide a deeper understanding of the unique athletic-related challenges and opportunities that exist within higher education.

Suggested accompanying readings include Alan Sack’s review of current reform philosophies within intercollegiate athletics (2009), and Brand’s in-depth articulation of the integrative view of intercollegiate athletics that corresponds to Sack’s “Academic Capitalism” model (2006).

**If an institution is hoping to decrease costs and increase participation opportunities in their intercollegiate athletics program, what are some important considerations in evaluating competitive intra-collegiate athletics as a potential model?** It is important to look at the goals and objectives of the traditional NCAA intercollegiate athletics model for each division to discuss what it “best”. The focus should include discussion, comparison and contrast with the Division III model and philosophy (which is very often neglected when discussing intercollegiate athletics although it represents the majority of college athletics programs). For example, the New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC) provides another intercollegiate model that may work for certain schools. Member institutions believe that athletic teams should be representative of the schools entire student body. The conference adheres to the NCAA Division III admissions and financial policies that prohibit athletic scholarships and award financial aid solely on the basis of need. NESCAC member, Williams College, boasts that approximately 50% of the students compete on at least one varsity, junior varsity, or formal club team. Ultimately, the “best” way is for the athletics program to match the mission of the institution.

**What are the benefits and/or drawbacks of the competitive intra-collegiate athletics model?** Answering this question will require students to articulate the pro’s and con’s of both the intra-collegiate model and the intercollegiate model. Courses in recreation programs may also want to include discussion on the pro’s and con’s of the intramural model. The major benefit of the intra-collegiate model is that more students can participate in the athletics on campus in a cost effective way. Under the intercollegiate model 264 athletes participated in varsity sports in 2000 at Ricks College. Under the intra-collegiate model 2,433 students participated in varsity sports. One drawback is that athletes who want the highest level of competition will not be able to develop their skills or satisfy that need, and therefore may be more likely to attend schools that support more traditional intercollegiate athletics. Other drawbacks of the intra-collegiate athletics model include a lack of community involvement, economic impact, and visibility generally associated with a traditional intercollegiate athletics model.

**What factors should an administrator consider in maximizing the educational potential of athletics within their institution?** One of the common criticisms of the traditional intercollegiate athletics model is that student-athletes are primarily athletes and they are not on campus to be educated. Traditional athletic models – particularly at the Division I level, often follow schedules that are detrimental to academic pursuits in order to maximize television revenue and/or commercial gains. On the other hand, proponents of traditional athletics programs often cite the lessons learned by student-athletes through their competitive experiences as education that is not easily duplicated in a classroom. The primary factor administrators should consider when maximizing the educational potential of athletics is what the type of experiences that are important to the student body. Students attend colleges for numerous reasons, and administrators need to pay close attention to the role that athletics plays in these decisions. Administrators should also consider how athletics fits into the overall mission of the university.
What factors should an administrator consider in maximizing the commercial potential of athletics within their institution? This question addresses the criticism that intercollegiate athletics is too commercial. Discussion should center on the administrators (both institutional and athletics program) need to consider how a sponsor’s brand complements or supports the educational and athletic mission of the university. Administrators of major sports programs also need to be concerned with the values they promote when considering the commercial potential of their athletic program. The intra-collegiate model would be less appealing to most companies looking to use athletics to market their brands - this would negatively impact the amount of sponsorship money available to the university. Further, the highly sought revenue and publicity that can come from national championship runs, bowl appearances, and regular season match-ups would largely be forfeited if an intra-collegiate model were adopted.

What impact would the intra-collegiate athletics model have on the institution’s brand and/or admissions? This question requires a comparison of the multiple ways that higher education has utilized intercollegiate athletics programs for the benefit of the institutions with the potential impact of an intra-collegiate model. Institutions have often utilized the athletics program as a campus entertainment option as well as an affiliation building enterprise. Discussions should include the impact of both models on admissions, visibility, publicity, and academic image of the institution.

What impact might there be on achieving racial diversity or gender equity in an intra-collegiate model compared to the intercollegiate model? This question will generate discussion relative to the positive and negative impact on minority groups (race and women) in intercollegiate athletics. Outside of revenue generating sports, most intercollegiate sports programs overwhelmingly consist of white athletes. Women are underrepresented in intercollegiate athletics programs, and lack of revenue generating potential for women’s sports is often cited. Discussion can include the sociological barriers to minority participation in sport. Would there be more or less incentive for athletes of color or females to participate in intra-collegiate athletics programs. There is little evidence available to suggest the intra-collegiate model would significantly change the racial or gender dynamics of athletics participation.

What factor would the public or private status of an institution play in the administration’s ability to drop intercollegiate athletics in favor of an intra-collegiate athletic model? This question fosters discussion about the role of public institutions within the state government, and about how intercollegiate athletics (or intra-collegiate athletics) helps the institution to satisfy the state’s mission of higher education. An obvious factor to discuss is the impact of state funding for public institutions that must be considered before adopting an intra-collegiate model. Private institutions have more latitude to implement large scale changes. Public institutions have to build consensus from a larger group of constituents.