

5 Financial Ramifications of Coronavirus on Division I Athletic Departments

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Abstract

In the spring of 2020, safety and health concerns with COVID-19 shut down college sports. Most notably, the National Collegiate Athletic Association's basketball tournament, better known as March Madness, was canceled, costing the Association and its member institutions almost \$1 billion. A common misconception concerning intercollegiate athletics is that most athletic departments generate revenue for their institutions. However, less than 30 of the 347 Division I athletic departments operate in the black. Thus, this loss of revenue has resulted in unprecedented financial issues and considerations, such as cutting sports, furloughing staff, and offering fewer support resources for athletes. Through the lens of resource dependence theory, this chapter offers a synthesis of the available literature and examines the financial ramifications of the coronavirus on Division I athletic department operations.

Keywords:

COVID-19, Finance, Intercollegiate athletics

Introduction

Athletic programs are often the “front porch” of many American institutions of higher education (Bass et al., 2015). Athletic department operations are managed by the Athletic Director (AD) who oversees coaches and senior level athletics employees such as administrators in the areas of athlete academics, compliance, event management, and finance, and reports to the institution president (Ott & Bates, 2015). Finances of athletic departments have received increased scrutiny as critics of college athletics argue that athletic departments are overly dependent on financial assistance in the form of subsidies from state governments and institutions (Cheslock & Knight, 2015). The average Division I athletic department competing at the highest level, often considered the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS), receives 12% of its total revenues from state

support and 7% from institutional subsidies and student fees. At the second highest level, the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS), the revenue from subsidies and student fees increases greatly: 51% of the operating budget comes from state support, while 19% comes from student fees (CAFI Database, n.d.). With massive media rights contracts with broadcasting companies and millions generated from football and men's basketball, many ask why athletics needs subsidizing in the first place (Cheslock & Knight, 2015). Despite these revenue streams, less than 30 of the 347 Division I programs in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) operate in the black (NCAA Finances, n.d.). Expenditures from travel, facility management and capital projects, and athletic scholarships for hundreds of athletes and salaries and benefits for hundreds of department personnel consume most of the revenue generated.

Financial operations of Division I athletic departments were interrupted in March 2020 when health concerns stemming from a global pandemic sparked by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) halted college sports. Through the lens of resource dependence theory (Bess & Dee, 2012), this chapter provides a synthesis of the available higher education and athletics literature to discuss the fiscal adjustments made by Division I athletic departments due to COVID-19.

Literature Review

Resource dependence theory states that organizations depend on their environments for resources (Bess & Dee, 2012). Because organizations, such as athletic departments, cannot internally produce all of their required resources, they become reliant on external actors such as the NCAA (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). The NCAA, as the external actor, has power over athletic departments in two ways: (1) determining if departments receive resources and (2) deciding how athletic departments can spend or use said resources. Actions taken by the NCAA, and the resulting ramifications on athletic departments, demonstrate one way in which resource dependence is evident in college athletics in the wake of COVID-19. Given the novelty of COVID-19, fluctuating developments, limited scholarly publications concerning COVID-19 and athletics, and the unprecedented nature of the virus and its impact on sports, much of the literature examined in this chapter primarily comes from reputable online journalism platforms covering higher education and/or intercollegiate athletics. While less traditional than scholarly articles, using these sources ensures an up-to-date and informed presentation of the current state of college athletics affairs. Additionally, where applicable, these sources are complemented with journal articles covering both the college athletics environment pre-virus and during the pandemic. The articles chosen highlight the importance of resource dependence in the college sports landscape.

The first three sections focus on March Madness cancellation, expenditures associated with scholarships for returning athletes, and financial ramifications of administrator furloughs, terminations, and sports cuts. However, at the time

of this writing, one vital area for Division I institutions remains uncertain: the truncated college football season. The fourth section offers a brief analysis of the financial advantages and disadvantages of playing or not playing football in the Fall 2020 semester.

The NCAA & March Madness

Founded in 1906, the NCAA is a nonprofit governing organization for 102 athletic conferences and 1,098 institutions across the United States, with the primary purpose of maintaining athletics as an integral part of educational programs (Satterfiled, 2015). The Association is organized into Divisions I, II, and III, with Division I often considered more athletically elite due to generous scholarship offerings, larger athletic departments, and substantial budgets. Additionally, Division I houses 347 institutions, over 6,000 athletic teams, and more than one-third of the NCAA's total number of athletes (Grant et al., 2015). Division I institutions are the focus of this chapter due to size as well as importance of these departments to the Association, their ability to generate massive amounts of revenue, and the extensive literature and coverage of these schools during COVID-19.

In March 2020, due to health threats associated with COVID-19, the NCAA canceled all winter and spring championship events, most notably March Madness, the single-elimination men's basketball tournament in which 68 teams across Division I compete to be crowned the National Champion. March Madness is one of the biggest American sporting events, bringing in \$867.5 million, over 80% of all the revenue generated by the NCAA in fiscal year 2017–2018 (NCAA, n.d.). Tournament revenue comes from two streams: sponsorships and TV media deals (Weight & Harry, 2019). The remaining portion of the NCAA's revenue comes from hosting other championship events and associated ticket sales, along with membership dues (NCAA, n.d.). However, the NCAA and its members are reliant on the tournament's revenue to subsidize the college athletics enterprise. This reliance on March Madness, along with dwindling contingency funds, created a host of fiscal issues, illustrating perhaps the greatest way in which resource dependence theory connects member institutions and the Association.

Prior to COVID-19, Division I athletic departments were expected to collectively receive \$600 million in NCAA distributions. Post-March Madness cancellation, distributions were \$225 million (NCAA, 2020). This highlights two important components to resource dependence theory: criticality, or importance of the resource, and scarcity, the availability of the resource (Bess & Dee, 2012). Because NCAA distributions are vital for the survival of these athletic departments, and because this money is scarce—there is not another supplier of such massive funds—departments are highly dependent on the NCAA. Thus, institutions and athletic departments needed to cut costs and develop innovative strategies to make up missing revenue, while also considering the safety of various stakeholders. For 2020, funds received from the NCAA are unrestricted, allowing conferences and schools to better support

their athletes during the uncertainty surrounding the virus, such as offering eligibility extensions for spring sport athletes. The financial significance of the tournament can also be seen in 2021, as the NCAA hosted March Madness amid the pandemic and without requiring teams to be vaccinated.

Athlete Eligibility Extension

Division I athletes are limited to four seasons of competition within a five-year span (NCAA Division I Manual, 2019). However, a few weeks after canceling all remaining championships, the NCAA released a statement allowing athletic departments to offer an additional year of athletic eligibility for spring sport athletes whose seasons were halted due to COVID-19. Given the continued uncertainty surrounding the virus, NCAA leadership also voted to allow schools to extend eligibility for athletes in fall and winter competitive seasons (Hosick, 2020a, 2020b).

While the NCAA offered this remedy to provide more support for athletes, it was up to individual departments to decide if and how to implement these changes. Thus, some programs, such as members of the Ivy League, decided not to offer additional eligibility (Associated Press, 2020), and others, depending on departmental financial resources, opted to increase or decrease the scholarships offered (Hosick, 2020a). For athletic programs that offered additional eligibility, projections indicated an increase in expenses from \$500,000 to almost \$1 million for athletes in just one competitive season (i.e., spring, fall, or winter) (Berkowitz & Myerberg, 2020). For Texas A&M University, the second most profitable college athletics program in the nation, bringing back 21 spring sport athletes who would have normally graduated, cost \$550,000 (Brown, 2020). Indiana University, which ranks 25th on revenue-generation for Division I schools, estimated its expenses associated with returning spring athletes at \$900,000 (Blau, 2020). For smaller athletic enterprises, such as Appalachian State University and Troy University, the cost to bring back spring senior athletes was expected to be \$225,000 and \$280,000, respectively (Berkowitz & Myerberg, 2020; Joyce, 2020). These eligibility expenses may be tripled, depending on how many fall and winter sport athletes return for another season.

The long-term implications of this extended eligibility remain unknown; however, this decision has already impacted recruitment and team rosters, and could affect scholarship allocation for athletes recruited in the coming years. Athletics leaders at national and institutional levels are considering how eligibility will be impacted and funded, as many Division I conferences postponed fall and some winter competition to spring 2021.

Athletic Administrative & Sponsorship Cuts

Another financial consequence of COVID-19 and the cessation of college athletics came in the form of terminations, consolidations, hiring freezes, and

furloughs. Salaries and benefits for athletic employees make up the majority of departmental expenses, with average percentage of total spending on employee compensation for FBS and FCS public athletic departments totaling 34.6% and 32.8%, respectively (Hirko & Sweitzer, 2015).

By the end of March 2020, the NCAA implemented its own pay reductions for executive members, along with a hiring freeze through the end of 2021 (Berkowitz, 2020a). Athletic departments across the United States quickly followed. The University of Arizona released a statement noting that the athletic director and the head coaches for baseball, football, and men's and women's basketball voluntarily cut their salaries by 20% as a means to help make up for a projected \$7.5 million shortfall for fiscal year 2019–2020 (Cluff, 2020). This shortfall partially stemmed from the cancellation of the 2020 Pacific12 (Pac-12) men's basketball conference tournament and missing NCAA distributions, another example of the fiscal dependence of institutions on both their affiliate conferences and NCAA. This is not unlike budgetary actions taken by various other athletic departments across Division I (Cherney, 2020). In a more drastic case, the University of Maryland said its department's financial hit due to COVID-19 was expected to be roughly \$40 million.

Other athletic departments instituted furloughs due to the lack of incoming revenue and the resulting economic downturn. The University of Louisville, facing a \$15 million 2019–2020 fiscal year shortage, announced indefinite furloughs for almost 50 staff. The AD also eliminated 40 positions, approximately one third of the department, initiated executive employee salary cuts, and reduced all team operating budgets for the foreseeable future by 15% (O'Neil, 2020; Robinson, 2020). These and other similar athletic reductions accompanied institution-wide cutbacks at most universities (Kelderman, 2020).

For some Division I athletic units, administrative reductions did not balance the budget, and decisions were made to terminate teams (Swanson & Smith, 2020). Eliminating sports is viewed as a last resort due to implications for athletes, coaches, and the athletic department's reputation. Sport termination often involves teams that are classified as non-revenue-generating sports, which, in Division I, typically include all sports outside of football and men's basketball. Football and men's basketball are lucrative due to massive media rights deals with television networks and money from ticket sales (Clotfelter, 2019), which provide revenue that subsidizes other sports (Hirko & Sweitzer, 2015). However, with the uncertainty surrounding football and basketball seasons, leaders were concerned about the potential for having significantly less revenue to support all sports and associated expenses (Berkowitz & Myerberg, 2020). Thus, sport elimination is also touted as a way to save money by cutting expenses.

Old Dominion University (ODU) became the first Division I athletic department to cut sports: Three weeks after the NCAA canceled March Madness, ODU discontinued its 60-year-old wrestling program (Hays, 2020). In the hopes of saving money, a slew of other institutions followed:

the University of Cincinnati cut its men's soccer team (Nightengale, 2020), the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay ended its sponsorship of men's and women's tennis (Mizan, 2020), and the University of Akron terminated its men's cross country, men's golf, and women's tennis programs (Cobb, 2020). Most notably, Stanford University eliminated almost one-third of its sports when athletics and institutional leaders cut 11 of its 36 teams. This impacted 240 athletes, 22 coaches, and 20 support staff (Tessier-Lavigne et al., 2020).

Without these sports teams, departments may save money in the form of distributing fewer dollars to scholarships, paying fewer coaches' salaries and benefits, and decreasing costs associated with managing facilities used by these programs. Akron's AD announced that cutting the three sports, along with reductions in employee positions and salaries, is projected to save the department \$4.4 million in current and future expenses (Williams, 2020). Similarly, Stanford's AD noted that prior to the pandemic, the department carried a \$12 million deficit. However, due to COVID-19, that deficit was expected to increase to \$25 million and potentially rise depending on the football season. Across all NCAA divisions, athletic departments have dropped almost 200 teams, with Division I constituting approximately half of those eliminations (Dittmore, n.d.). These elimination decisions are clearly linked to missing resources and departments' challenges to find external assistance, outside of NCAA distributions, to financially support the enterprise (Bess & Dee, 2012).

While potentially costly to an athletic department, non-revenue teams can bring in significant amounts of tuition revenue for institutions. Many athletes competing in non-revenue sports do not receive full athletics-based scholarships, and thus, still pay some or all of their tuition and other university expenses. Some scholars and members of the media have argued that if an institution were to begin a new non-revenue sport program and recruit students, particularly out-of-state or international students, on partial or no scholarship, that the institution could actually profit (Dittmore, n.d.; Hardwick-Day, 2008; Novy-Williams, 2020). Additionally, some critics of cutting sports note that rather than saving this money, it is reinvested in football programs (Weaver, 2020).

Football & Coronavirus

Many scholars have noted that intercollegiate sports, particularly football, is the tail wagging the athletics dog (Clotfelter, 2019; Lopiano & Zimbalist, 2020). In fact, during the coronavirus pandemic, athletic directors have expressed strong sentiments about the need to have a football season, with the University of Florida's AD stating: "from a financial standpoint, if we're not playing football games in the fall, it will shake the foundation of college athletics. As everyone knows, football pays for the enterprise to go forward" (Bianchi, 2020). This quote highlights the criticality of media rights deals in sustaining athletic departments, another example of resource dependence in

college sports. The keen emphasis on a football season grew from the foregone March Madness funds and decreased NCAA distributions, making the sport increasingly vital for Division I athletic departments' budgets.

On August 13, 2020, the NCAA officially canceled fall sport championships, including FCS football. While the NCAA has governance over FBS sports outside of football, because it does not provide a championship or bowl games for these programs—that is managed by the College Football Playoff—members of the FBS division have been more hesitant to postpone football and fall sports seasons. Citing too many unknowns about virus implications for athlete health along with liability concerns, the Mid-American Conference (MAC) became the first FBS conference to postpone fall sports until spring 2021 (Silverstein & Patterson, 2020). This was followed by presidents at the Big Ten and Pac-12 conferences opting to postpone their seasons until the following semester (Anderson, 2020).

Still, conferences such as the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Big 12, and Southeastern Conference (SEC), remained steadfast in their determination to compete in the fall. Conferences that postponed fall sports, football in particular, were forgoing millions of dollars from media deals and ticket sales. Power Five programs operating without a football season were expected to lose an average of \$78 million (Berkowitz, 2020b). Some of this lost income could be made up during a spring football season, but many institutional leaders noted the potential for no spring competitions if the virus gained momentum. As such, conferences who originally decided to not hold a football season (i.e., MAC, Big Ten, etc.), backtracked, including every FBS conference. Individual schools could decide to opt out, and out of the 130 FBS teams, only three did not compete in 2020. While athletic departments stated that the reason for a return was to provide sport opportunities for their athletes, critics argue such decisions are rooted in revenue dependence (Weaver, 2020).

Despite the varying decisions made across Division I, there were financial advantages and disadvantages of a fall football season. Football offers a host of benefits; mainly, a fall season ensured a revenue stream from the sport, albeit at a smaller level than the years before COVID-19. For programs who admitted fans, stadiums operated at a reduced capacity—depending on state and institution regulations anywhere from 20% to 50%—and revenue was generated from ticket sales, parking, and other auxiliary services. A football season may also have ensured continued donor support, as most athletics donors engage in philanthropy, such as buying premium football tickets (Stinson & Howard, 2010). Additionally, playing football and potentially other sports, enabled departments to continue charging students some athletics fees, a significant source of income for many programs.

However, the most significant financial benefit from a football season emerged from media rights deals conferences and institutions have with broadcasting companies. A recent inquiry by *ESPN* using 2018 tax filings by Power Five conferences—schools with the biggest athletic programs including the ACC, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12, and SEC—noted that TV and

other media money generated anywhere from \$237 million to \$440 million for these conferences and their members. That funding is lost, or substantially reduced, without a football season. Media deals and ticket sales tied to football alone for the schools in the aforementioned five conferences, make up 60% of their athletics departments' combined operating revenues. Institutions competing in Division I outside of the Power Five would also lose millions. Undoubtedly, COVID-19 reinforced athletic departments' dependence on financial resources and commercialization (Weaver, 2020).

The pandemic also created significant costs associated with the football season, particularly regarding the health and safety of athletes, coaches, administrators, and staff. In fact, many scholars in higher education denounced athletic departments' and administrators' decision to return athletes to campus. Lopiano and Zimbalist (2020) argued steps to bring athletes back, especially football players, were disconcerting and neglected the safety of too many constituents to be rationalized. Indeed, they noted that higher education "lost its mind" (Lopiano & Zimbalist, 2020). Even athletes spoke out with one University of California, Los Angeles football player stating, "we're going to come to a point where a college player will literally have to die from COVID-19 for someone to understand what's going on" (Russell, 2020).

Given the uncertainty, increased testing and safety protocols for athletes, coaches, administrators, staff, and fans were a fiscal focal point for departments' expenses, both with and without football and other sport seasons. The financial considerations of testing consistently and effectively became the driving forces for leaders making health decisions. As athletes came back for workouts in June and July, athletic directors across Division I discussed budgetary impacts of testing, with some noting just testing the incoming athletes cost \$500,000 to \$2 million (Thamel, 2020). Additionally, throughout the 2020 season athletic departments faced expenses from COVID-19 team outbreaks. Outbreaks led to games being postponed or canceled depending on the conference, which influenced money received from TV deals. For example, each canceled PAC-12 football game cost the conference and its members \$5 million (Wilner, 2020b). In addition, outbreaks required increased testing and quarantining, often in hotels, adding hundreds of thousands of dollars to these growing expenses. There were also expenses complementary to testing, stemming from increased materials such as hand sanitizer, gloves and masks, thermometers, and disinfectant fogger machines, and costs to train staff (LEAD1, 2020a). Similarly, more game day staff was needed to implement new health and safety regulations.

Litigation from an athlete or another constituent offered another potential expense. While some institutions drafted documents informing athletes of the risks associated with training and competing, others designed waivers that prevented athletes and others who may contract COVID-19 from suing (Dellenger, 2020; Pickman, 2020). However, the enforcement of such waivers depends on the state (Cotten, 2016; LEAD1, 2020b; Zagger, 2020).

Additionally, another trend involved the inclusion of a statement on the back or bottom of an event ticket stating that the institution was not liable if an attendee contracted the virus (LEAD1, 2020b). However, as with athlete waivers, fans remain a potential litigation source.

There are a multitude of financial measures that institutions also considered. These included honoring athlete scholarships across all remaining teams and paying coaches, administrators, and staff all or part of salaries and benefits. Some conferences, such as the Pac-12, implemented loan programs where conference members were eligible to receive up to an \$83 million loan with 3.75% interest over the next ten years (Wilner, 2020a). Additionally, debt and rent payment for facilities, if applicable, remained an expense during the pandemic.

Discussion and Conclusions

Regardless of how long the coronavirus pandemic lasts, there will be continued fallout from this period. Literature suggests there are at least three critical areas of future financial implications stemming from pandemic management: safety and training, media deals and ticket sales, and insurance and reserves. Researchers believe that even after the vaccine rollout for coronavirus, it is likely that some of the safety and health precautions implemented will remain, such as increased sanitization and monitoring of health conditions (LEAD1, 2020a; Parnell et al., 2020). The continuation of these practices is important for the well-being of all stakeholders but will add an expense line to budgets in the coming years.

With evidence demonstrating athletic departments' resource dependence on broadcasting deals, media rights deals are another area conferences and athletic departments will focus on even more. Prior to COVID-19, fan attendance at college sporting events was already decreasing (Clotfelter, 2019). With safety concerns associated with the virus, the number of fans who will remain at home to watch their teams compete, rather than trekking to arenas, could rise. This projected increase in at-home fans offers conferences and athletic programs leverage to seek more revenue from media deals. However, this increase in money from television and other media rights comes at the expense of ticket sales and perpetuates the reliance on media deals for revenue. Statistics from the College Athletics Financial Information Database show schools in the FBS, on average, receive 22% of their overall revenue from NCAA distributions and media rights and 19% from ticket sales. For Power Five athletic programs, those numbers jump to 30%–43% from distributions and media deals and 15%–24% from ticket sales. With changes in fan behavior, it is probable that percentages from the former will rise, while the latter will fall.

Finally, institutions and athletic departments must revisit the type of insurance they hold and whether or not they have the proper terms in place should another catastrophic event occur. Similarly, in the current model in

which departments spend what they make, or even spend more than they make (Blue, 2019; Fort, 2015), further emphasis on bolstering departmental reserves would be fiscally responsible and assist in preserving the collegiate model for generations to come. Such actions would decrease dependence on NCAA distributions and media deals, limiting athletic departments' vulnerability to the potential scarcity of this income stream (Bess & Dee, 2012).

Implications

It appears college athletics are “an essential business” during COVID-19, which speaks volumes about the connection of intercollegiate sports and higher education. It remains to be seen if the coronavirus may actually serve as a long-term positive influence on college sports. With reduced NCAA distributions, expenses associated with extended athlete eligibility, department furloughs and sport terminations, and the reduced football season, schools may be forced to consider new operating models that could result in fiscal conservatism and frugality for the years to come. In this way, athletic departments would engage in dependency-reduction strategies, creating a more financially stable athletics environment (Bess & Dee, 2012). Additionally, this could spark a financial reform in which athletic departments devote resources to areas critics say are neglected, such as academics, mental health, diversity and inclusion, and Title IX.

The pandemic has undoubtedly altered the relationship between education and athletics, and it is up to leaders across campus to understand how athletics financially fits with the institutional mission as intercollegiate sports moves forward post COVID-19.

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Part II

**COVID-19 and
Academic Issues in
Higher Education**

Special Topics and Themes



COVID-19 AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

Exploring Contemporary Issues and Challenges

Edited by **Ravichandran Ammigan | Roy Y. Chan | Krishna Bista**

Foreword by Darla K. Deardorff

 **STAR**SCHOLARS
N E T W O R K

Praise for this book

This book is a must-read for all university leaders and senior managers to enable them to get a better insight into the numerous challenges facing academia in the new normal, where it is not only about academic excellence but also about the human dimension through the enhanced use of technology.

—Dhanjay Jhurry, Professor and Vice-Chancellor,
University of Mauritius, Mauritius

This thought-provoking book captures contemporary changes to higher education at the micro and macro level post-2020. Stakeholders across the sector will benefit from reading the research-driven chapters that are stimulating and insightful. The book interrogates and challenges ways in which internationalization and global mobility can be re-imagined.

—Dawn Joseph, Associate Professor,
Deakin University, Australia

This book shows a more intensive and multi-faceted response by the higher education community to the pandemic that one might have expected. Attention is paid notably to sustain international life on campus.

—Ulrich Teichler, Professor Emeritus,
International Centre for Higher Education Research,
University of Kassel, Germany

This volume is a welcome addition to the literature on international Higher Education produced during the COVID-19 era. With a sensitively chosen array of topics, it shows new thinking around internationalisation, which is encouraging for all, and is exactly what is needed.

—Amanda C. Murphy, Professor and Director,
Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation,
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Italy

With the COVID-19 pandemic seeing no end in sight and its effects on international higher education for students around the world yet unknown, the importance of this timely book cannot be overstated. At a time when we are

literally awash in countless editorials prognosticating on *possible* implications of this health catastrophe, it is refreshing to get a carefully collected series of essays that step back, take a deep breath, and bring us back to the fundamental questions we need to be asking at this most dangerous time for humanity.

—Bernhard Streitwieser, IEP Program
Director & Associate Professor of International
Education & International Affairs,
George Washington University, USA

This is a valuable addition to higher education for understanding the complexities that COVID-19 introduced into the academic landscape. This volume explores valuable topics and issues such as employability, research and mentoring, innovative teaching and learning, and emerging opportunities during the pandemic.

—Jane E. Gatewood, Vice Provost for Global
Engagement, University of Rochester, USA

This timely book is much needed for practitioners, scholars, and policy makers who are grappling with the challenges created by the pandemic. The book is comprehensive given the depth and breath of topics. The human centric approach is refreshing.

—Fanta Aw, Vice President of Campus Life &
Inclusive Excellence, American University, USA

COVID-19 and Higher Education in the Global Context: Exploring Contemporary Issues and Challenges

COVID-19 and Higher Education in the Global Context: Exploring Contemporary Issues and Challenges addresses the lasting impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in the higher education sector and offers insights that inform policy and practice. Framed in a global context, this timely book captures a wide variety of topics, including student mobility, global partnerships and collaboration, student health and wellbeing, enrollment management, employability, and graduate education. It is designed to serve as a resource for scholar-practitioners, policymakers, and university administrators as they reimagine their work of comparative and international higher education in times of crisis. The collection of chapters assembled in this volume calls for a critical reflection on the opportunities and challenges that have emerged as a result of the global pandemic, and provides as a basis for how tertiary education systems around the world can learn from past experiences and shared viewpoints as institutions recalibrate operations, innovate programs, and manage change on their respective campuses.

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COVID-19 and Higher Education in the Global Context

Exploring Contemporary Issues and
Challenges

**Edited by
Ravichandran Ammigan,
Roy Y. Chan, and Krishna Bista**



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**In memory of those who lost their lives during the
COVID-19 pandemic worldwide**

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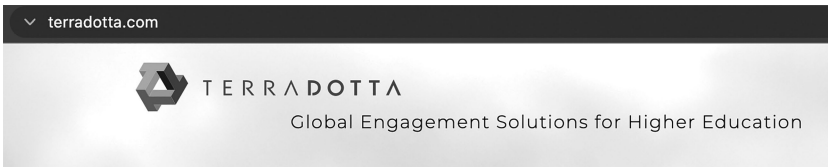
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Foreword

Darla K. Deardorff

The COVID-19 pandemic has represented a unifying challenge globally, providing a defining era in human existence as the pandemic upended life as we know it. *COVID-19 and Higher Education in the Global Context: Exploring Contemporary Issues and Challenges*, edited by Ammigan, Chan, and Bista, delves into the pandemic's impact on higher education around the world. Such an exploration empowers “educators, administrators, practitioners, policy makers, and families” with ideas and guidance that not only can be applied in the current context but also in the post-COVID future.

As the world emerges from the COVID pandemic, it is good to remember the signs of hope that have been there all along from the small gestures of kindness to the heroic efforts of those on the frontlines, from strangers lifting their voices together in song across balconies as the pandemic began with the later Jerusalema dance challenge that swept around the world, even as the pandemic was raging. This pandemic has shown us that we are all truly interconnected, for better or for worse. Desmond Tutu reminds us that we are all in this together and that our humanity is bound up together. We are members of one human family, and when some members are hurting, we all are hurt. He goes on to say, “For us to engage in the practices that will ensure that we all prosper, we must come to know that each of us is linked in the chain of our common humanity.”

As we move into the light of a new day, there is radical hope in truly embracing our shared humanity. Let's seek to see ourselves in others. Let's seek to see the whole picture through discovering others' perspectives beyond our own. Let's seek to see the invisible among us and to remember the power of being seen and heard. As we do so, we can reflect on some of the following questions:

- What do I know about my neighbors?
- Do I make an effort to learn more?
- What are others' perspectives and can I articulate those?
- What are the connections I see in others to my own experiences?
- How much do I really listen for understanding and seek first to understand?

Higher education provides opportunities for students to explore these and other questions, as universities seek to educate global citizens. As we have come to understand more poignantly over the last year that we are indeed part of one global community, we need to remember that education is more than employment or even graduating global citizens—in the end, it is about how we come together as neighbors both locally and globally, to build a better future together. We can make choices every day that help make the world better for all. As Tutu noted, “When we step into our neighborhoods, we can engage in the practices of good neighborliness or we can choose not to. The quality of life on our planet now and in the future will be determined by the small daily choices that we make as much as by the big decisions in the corridors of power.” As we move forward into a post-pandemic era, we must remember that actions matter and what we do impacts others. What daily actions will we take to support the most vulnerable among us? To improve the quality of life for others? How will we uphold justice and dignity for all in the human family? In the end, how will we be good neighbors to each other?

Let us commit to taking action to address the racial injustices and inequities faced by our neighbors. Let us commit to being a good neighbor, as we live in authentic solidarity with each other, aspiring to be compassionate, generous, and kind, knowing that we can find our greatest joy in showing love to all and that in doing so, we are embracing the oneness of our humanity.

Bio

Darla K. Deardorff is the Executive Director of the Association of International Education Administrators, a national professional organization based in Durham, North Carolina, USA. She is also a research scholar with the Social Science Research Institute at Duke University, where she has been an adjunct faculty member in the Program in Education and a faculty affiliate with International/Comparative Studies. In addition, she is an Adjunct Professor at North Carolina State University, a Visiting Research Professor at Nelson Mandela University in South Africa, and at Meiji University Research Institute of International Education (RIIE) in Japan as well as visiting faculty at Shanghai International Studies University (SISU) in China. Dr. Deardorff has served on faculty of Harvard University’s Future of Learning Institute as well as Harvard University’s Global Education Think Tank, in addition to being on faculty at the Summer Institute of Intercultural Communication in Portland, Oregon. She has also been an affiliated faculty at the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill, and Leeds Beckett University (formerly Leeds Metropolitan) in the United Kingdom and taught at Thammasat University in Bangkok, Thailand. She receives numerous invitations from around the world (in over 30 countries including in Europe, Latin America, Africa, Australia, and Asia) to speak on her research and work on intercultural competence and international education assessment, and is a noted expert on these topics, being named a Senior Fulbright Specialist (to South Africa and to Japan).

Dr. Deardorff has published widely on topics in international education, global leadership, and intercultural learning/assessment, and has published eight books including as editor of *The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (Sage, 2009) as well as lead editor of *The SAGE Handbook of International Higher Education* (Sage, 2012) with Hans de Wit, John Heyl and Tony Adams, *Building Cultural Competence* (Stylus, 2012) with Kate Berardo, and co-author of *Beneath the Tip of the Iceberg: Improving English and Understanding US American Cultural Patterns* (University of Michigan Press, 2011). She is also the author of the recently published book on *Demystifying Outcomes Assessment for International Educators: A Practical Approach* (Stylus, 2015) and co-editor of *Intercultural Competence in Higher Education: International Approaches, Assessment, Application* (Routledge, 2017) with Lily Arasaratnam-Smith. Her seventh book *Leading Internationalization* (Stylus, 2018) is with Harvey Charles, and her most recent book is *Manual on Developing Intercultural Competencies: Story Circles* (Routledge/UNESCO, 2019). E-mail: d.deardorff@duke.edu

