



# Optimization of the Senior Woman Administrator Designation

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Study Findings-November 2017





As a core value, the NCAA believes in and is committed to diversity, inclusion and gender equity among its student-athletes, coaches and administrators. We seek to establish and maintain an inclusive culture that fosters equitable participation for student-athletes and career opportunities for coaches and administrators from diverse backgrounds. Diversity and inclusion improve the learning environment for all student-athletes and enhance excellence within the Association. The office of inclusion will provide or enable programming and education, which sustains foundations of a diverse and inclusive culture across dimensions of diversity including, but not limited to, age, race, sex, class, national origin, creed, educational background, religion, gender identity, disability, gender expression, geographical location, income, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation and work experiences.

*Adopted by the NCAA Executive Committee, April 2010*

*Amended by the NCAA Board of Governors, April 2017*

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Thank you to higher education consulting firm 3 Fold Group for its quality work and dedicated leadership on this project. And, thank you to the NCAA research group for its significant contributions to the national survey that is essential to this project.





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# Introduction

Based on significant and varied feedback about the impact and desired future of the senior woman administrator (SWA) designation, the NCAA office of inclusion, with the support of the NCAA Committee on Women's Athletics and the NCAA Gender Equity Task Force, commissioned the 3 Fold Group, a higher education consulting firm, to conduct a study of the SWA designation. The primary purpose of the study was to identify opportunities to enhance the **impact** of the designation and the **experience** of women serving as SWAs.

The SWA designation was created in 1981 to encourage meaningful involvement of female administrators in the **decision-making** process in intercollegiate athletics. It is intended to enhance **representation** of female experience and perspective at the institutional, conference and national levels.



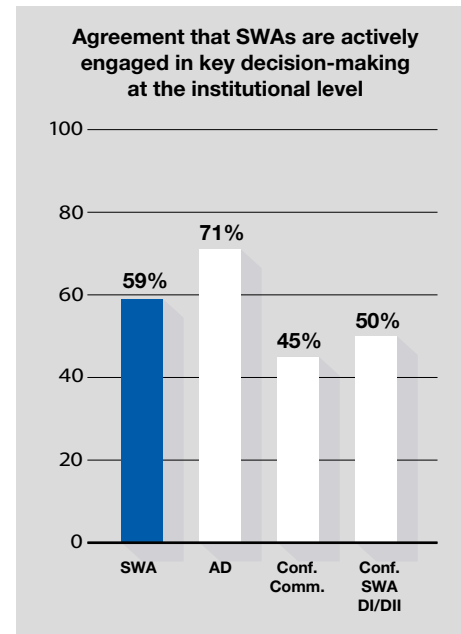


# Key Findings

The senior woman administrator is defined as the highest-ranking female involved in the management of an institution's intercollegiate athletics program.

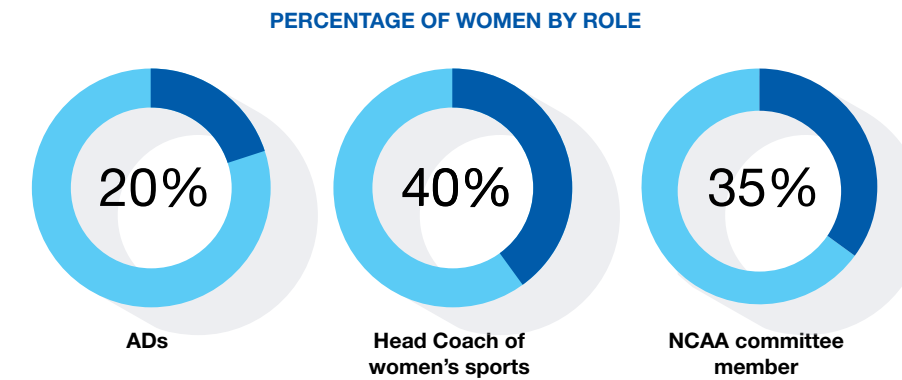
## Impact on Decision-Making

- The SWA designation has encouraged meaningful involvement of female administrators in the decision-making process in intercollegiate athletics, **but a perception gap exists**.
- Meaningful involvement varies by division.
- Seventy-five percent of SWAs report being actively engaged in the hiring process for senior-level positions, but only 46 percent are involved in major financial decisions.
- Sixty-six percent of SWAs have sport oversight responsibilities, but only 13 percent oversee football or men's basketball.



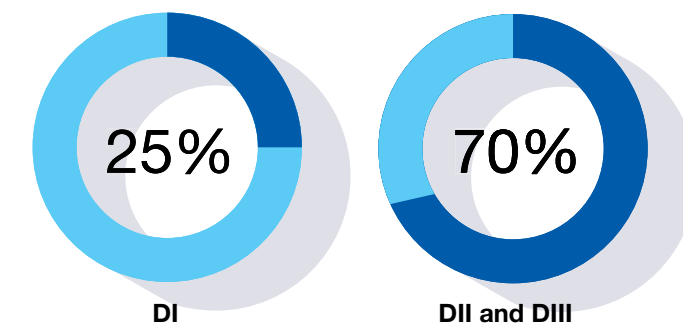
## Impact on Representation

- The SWA designation has enhanced representation of female experience and perspective at the institutional, conference and national levels.
- **Yet, women remain under-represented in the most visible positions** (AD, head coach and NCAA committee member).



- There is a lack of racial and ethnic diversity in the SWA population; 15 percent of SWAs are women of color.
- Eighty-four percent of SWAs, 56 percent of ADs and 61 percent of commissioners agree that without the SWA designation, some institutions would have no women involved in the management of their athletics program.
- The percent of women serving on NCAA committees went from nearly zero before 1981 to 35 percent in 1985. That figure remains near 35 percent today.
- In 2015-16, 25 percent of DI and more than 70 percent of **DII and DIII institutions reported having zero or one female administrator** (defined as assistant AD, associate AD or AD).

### PERCENTAGE OF INSTITUTIONS WITH 0 TO 1 FEMALE ADMINISTRATORS\*

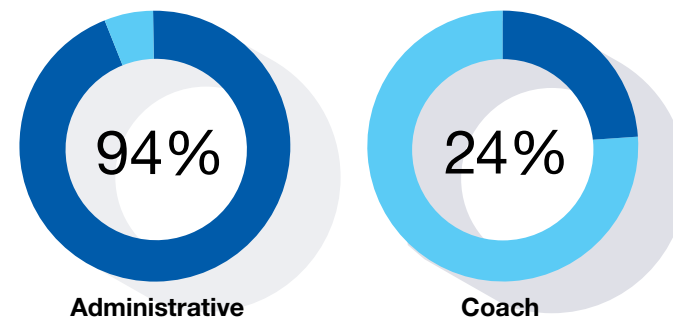


\* Assistant athletics directors, associate athletics directors and athletics directors.

## Experience of SWAs

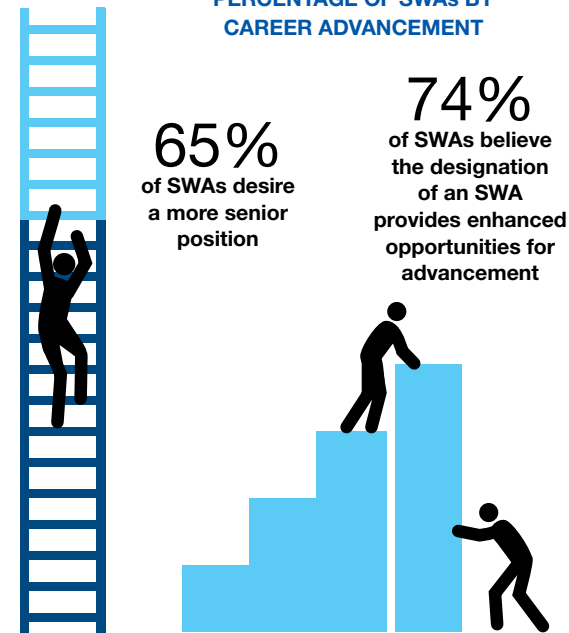
- The experiences of SWAs vary greatly by division.
- While there are perceptual challenges related to the role, **most SWAs find the designation to be desirable, and that it helps to advance their career.**

PERCENTAGE OF SWAs BY POSITION\*



\*Some SWAs have dual roles.

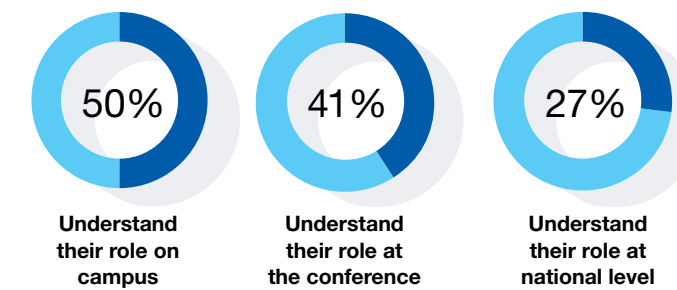
PERCENTAGE OF SWAs BY CAREER ADVANCEMENT



## Role Clarity

- There is a **significant lack of understanding of the SWA role by the women who hold it**, as well as all other key constituent groups in intercollegiate athletics.
- **Ninety-two percent of ADs report understanding the SWA designation while 45 percent of SWAs report having an AD who understands the SWA role on campus.**
- Few SWAs receive training specific to the role.

PERCENTAGE OF SWAs UNDERSTANDING OF ROLE



## SWA Common Misperceptions

- The SWA is NOT the senior women's administrator; it is the senior **woman** administrator. The purpose of the role is not to oversee women's sports or be limited to gender equity compliance.
- The SWA designation is not a position.
- "Senior" refers to the highest-ranking female in the athletics department, and not the longest serving or oldest.
- The SWA designation is not a requirement. The NCAA Constitution defines the term, and does not technically require an institution to have an SWA.

## Opportunities to Optimize the SWA Designation

*A subcommittee of the Committee on Women's Athletics is currently creating action plans for these opportunities and will be engaging other NCAA membership committees in these efforts.*

1. Clarify the purpose of the designation.
2. Communicate the purpose of the designation.
3. Measure the experiences of women holding the designation.
4. Address low representation of ethnic minority women within the SWA population.
5. Acknowledge and accommodate divisional differences.
6. Offer professional development programming to train SWAs.



# Process

The study included five phases.

## 1. Literature review

The consulting team reviewed articles and past research studies focused on the involvement of the SWA and perceptions of the SWA designation.

## 2. Examination of legislative history and NCAA committee membership, athletics director and coach demographics

The consulting team examined NCAA legislative actions related to the SWA designation, the number of women serving in the NCAA governance structure and the number of women serving as athletics directors and coaches since the creation of the SWA designation.

## 3. Focus group discussions with Divisions I, II and III SWAs

Focus groups were conducted with institutional SWAs in each division (one group in Division I, one in Division II and three in Division III) and 27 Division III SWAs involved in a professional development program. The purpose of the focus groups was to share highlights of the academic research and history of the designation to prompt discussion about what has changed or remained the same from past findings. Results of these discussions were used to construct the membership survey.

## 4. Interviews with SWAs, athletics directors and thought leaders

Twenty-nine total interviews were conducted – 10 with SWAs (five in Division I, two in Division II, three in Division III), 13 with athletics directors (six in Division I, three in Division II, four in Division III) and six with thought leaders (representatives from women's sports and women's professional organizations) in intercollegiate athletics. The purpose of the interviews was to examine the personal experiences of current SWAs and perceptions of the role on the campus, conference and national levels. Results of these discussions were used to construct the membership survey.

## 5. Membership survey

A survey examining the experiences and perceptions of the SWA role was distributed to NCAA SWAs, athletics directors, conference commissioners and Divisions I and II conference SWAs April 19, 2017. The survey closed May 12, 2017. The overall survey return rates were SWAs at 61 percent, directors of athletics at 42 percent, commissioners at 67 percent and DI/DII conference SWAs at 64 percent. A PowerPoint with survey results can be found at [ncaa.org/about/resources/inclusion](http://ncaa.org/about/resources/inclusion).

## 6. Examination of opportunities

The Committee on Women's Athletics, the Minority Opportunities and Interests Committee, and the Gender Equity Task Force will consider which of the opportunities outlined in this report will be pursued, and will develop related implementation plans.





# Detailed Findings

This study was structured around themes from academic literature, existing NCAA resources on best practices for SWAs, and personal experiences and opinions of SWAs and other leaders in intercollegiate athletics. It included an NCAA membership survey with participation by 61 percent of SWAs, 42 percent of athletics directors, 67 percent of conference commissioners and 64 percent of Divisions I and II conference SWAs.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The survey only included Divisions I and II conference SWAs because this is not a formal designation in Division III.

# Impact on Decision-Making

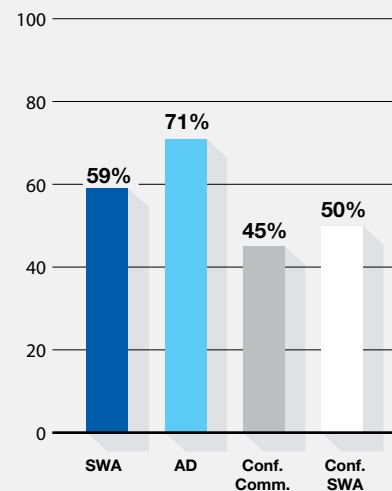
The SWA designation has encouraged meaningful involvement of female administrators in the decision-making process in intercollegiate athletics in some ways, but a perception gap exists. Involvement varies by division.

A majority of SWAs agree that SWAs are actively involved in key decision-making at the campus and conference levels, but a perception gap exists across the groups surveyed.

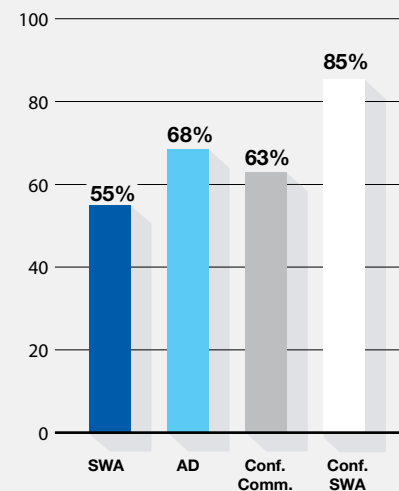
More ADs, but fewer conference personnel, perceive SWAs to be actively involved on their campuses, as compared to SWAs themselves.

With regard to conference involvement, ADs, commissioners and conference SWAs report higher levels of engagement than do the SWAs. Also, with the exception of conference SWAs, all groups indicate lower levels of SWA involvement nationally than on campuses or in the conferences.

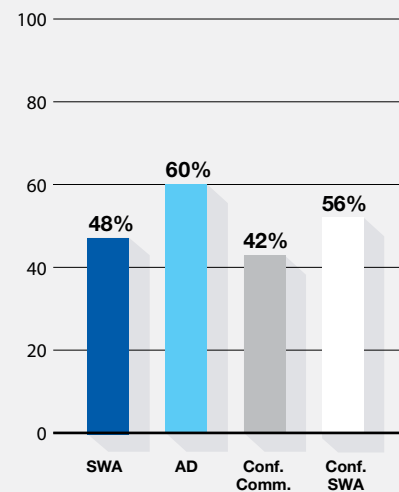
SWAs are actively engaged in key decision making at the **institution** level.



SWAs are actively engaged in key decision making at the **conference** level.

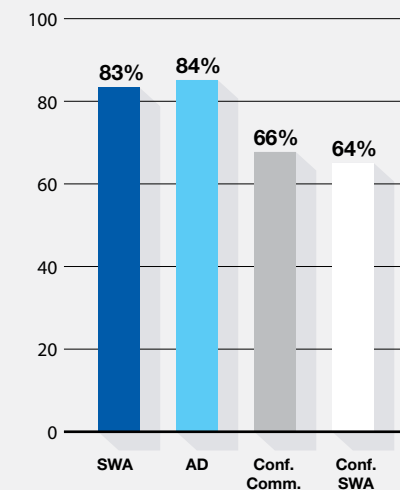


SWAs are actively engaged in key decision making at the **national** level.

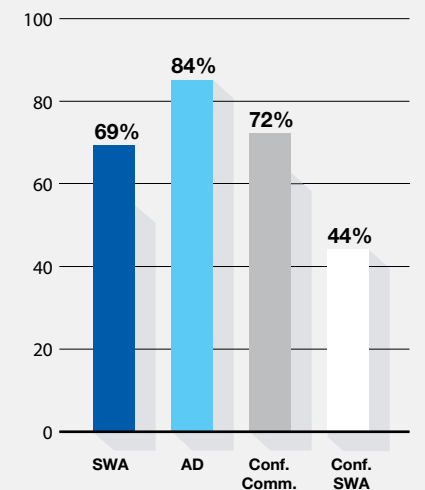


The perception gap persists when looking at how the perspective of the SWA is considered and how it is valued.

The SWA designation provides the opportunity for the perspective of women to be **considered** in the management of athletics programs.



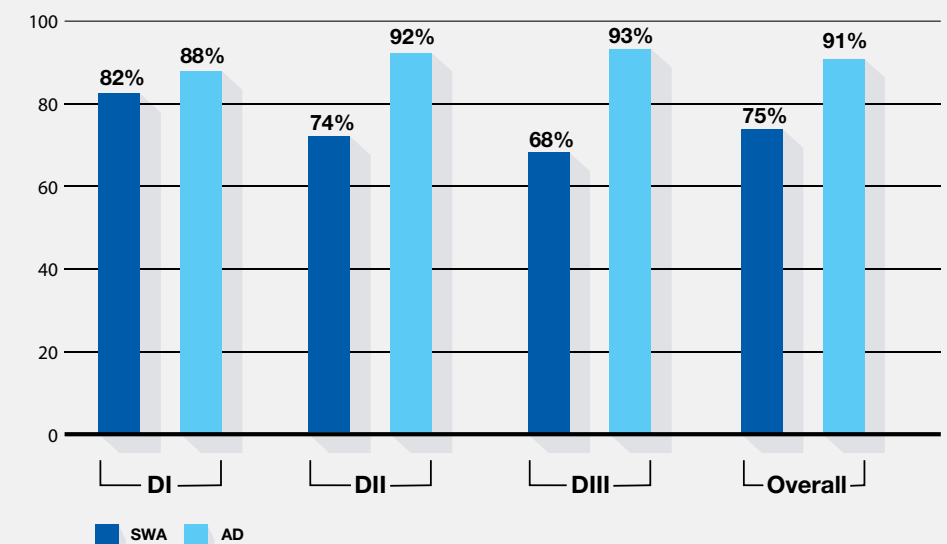
The SWA designation provides the opportunity for the perspective of women to be **valued** in the management of athletics programs.



Regarding decision-making responsibilities, most SWAs report significant involvement in the hiring process for senior-level and coaching positions, but significantly fewer report participation in major financial decisions.

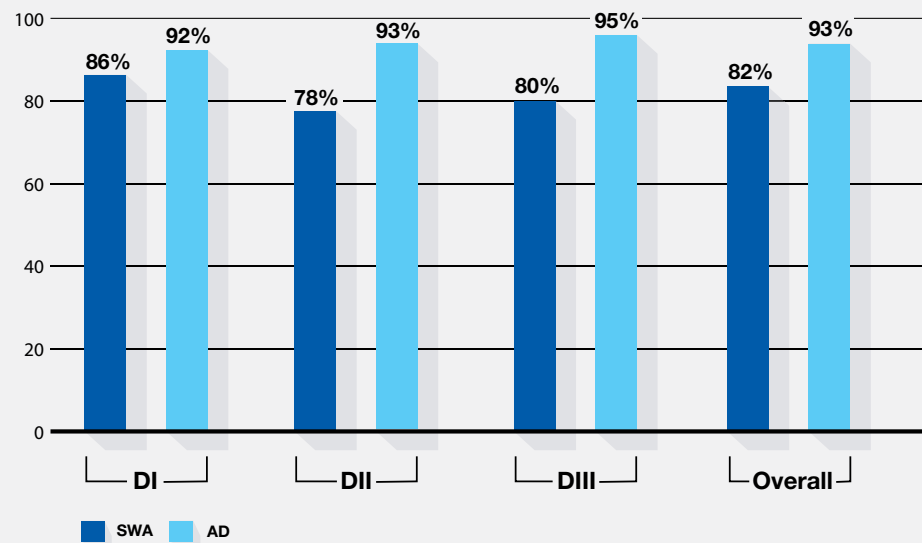
Again, there is a perception gap between ADs and SWAs, as well as divisional differences, especially regarding financial decisions.

The SWA is involved in the hiring process for **senior athletics staff**.

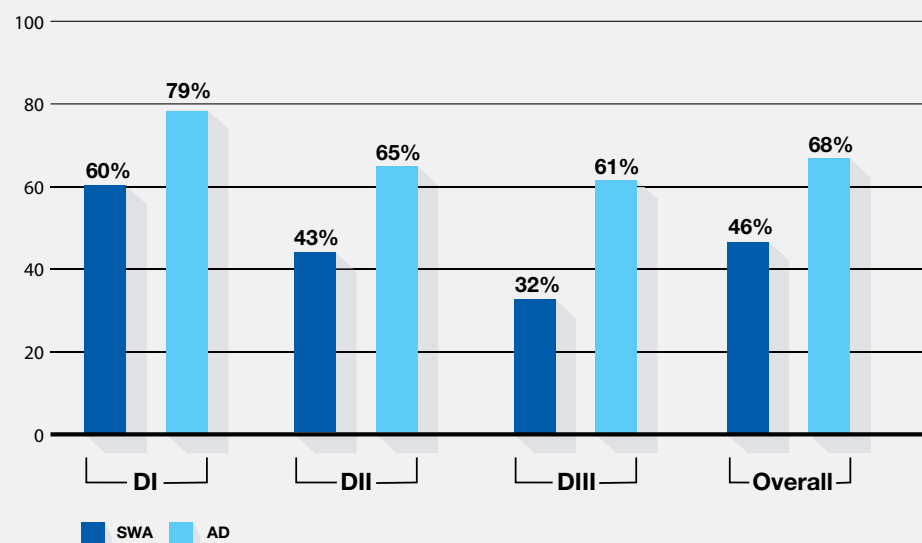




The SWA is involved in the hiring process for **head coaches**.

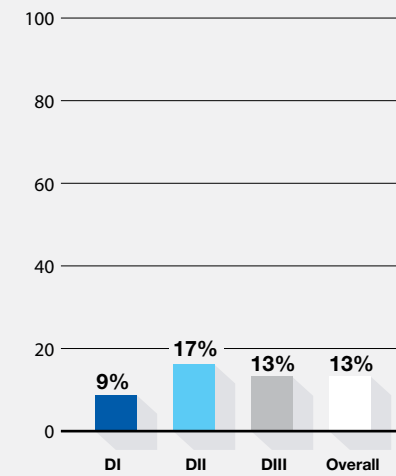


The SWA is involved in **major financial decisions for the athletics department** (e.g., capital expenditures, salaries, major operational expenses, etc.)

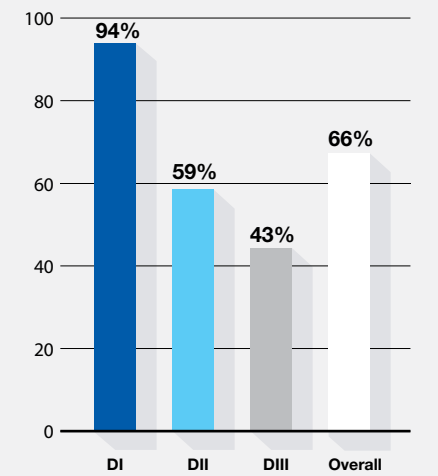


Sport oversight responsibilities vary by division, and only a small percentage of SWAs oversee football or men's basketball.

The SWA has oversight of **men's basketball and/or football**.



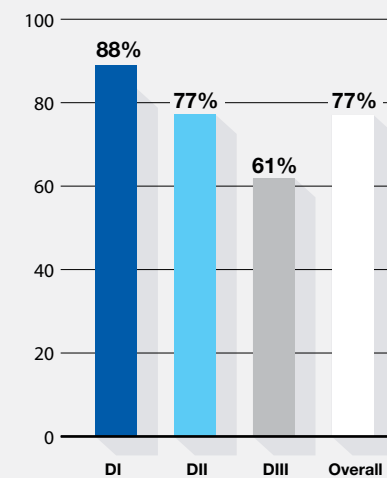
The SWA has oversight of **sports other than men's basketball/football**.



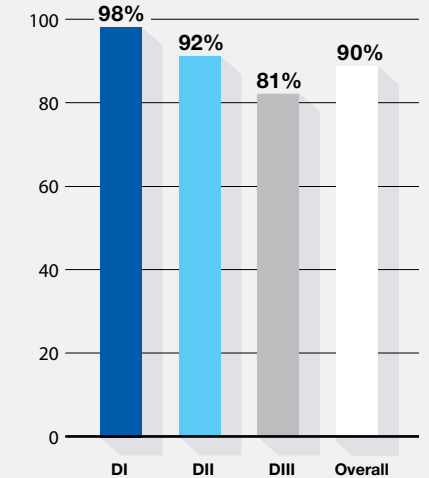
Most SWAs consider themselves to be crucial members of the senior management team, though divisional variations exist, with Division I reporting the highest and Division III the lowest levels of participation.

The perception gap between SWAs and ADs is seen again on this measure. All but 3 percent of SWAs said they report directly to the AD.

**SWA perception** that the SWA is recognized as a crucial part of the senior management team.



**AD perception** that the SWA is recognized as a crucial part of the senior management team.

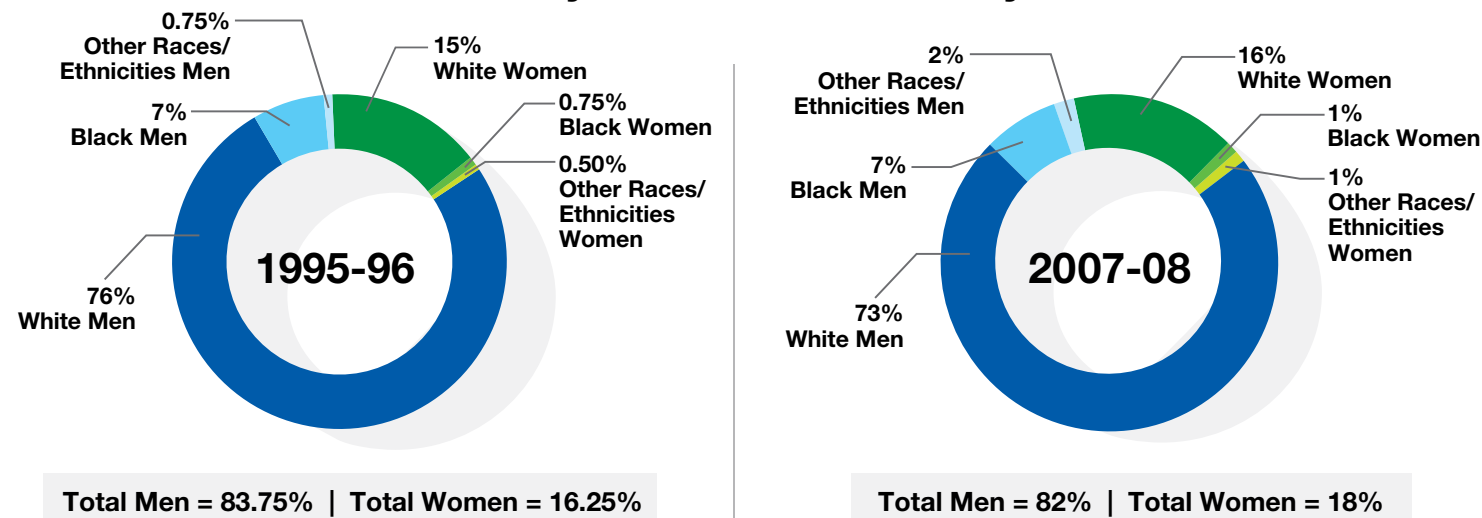


# Impact on Representation

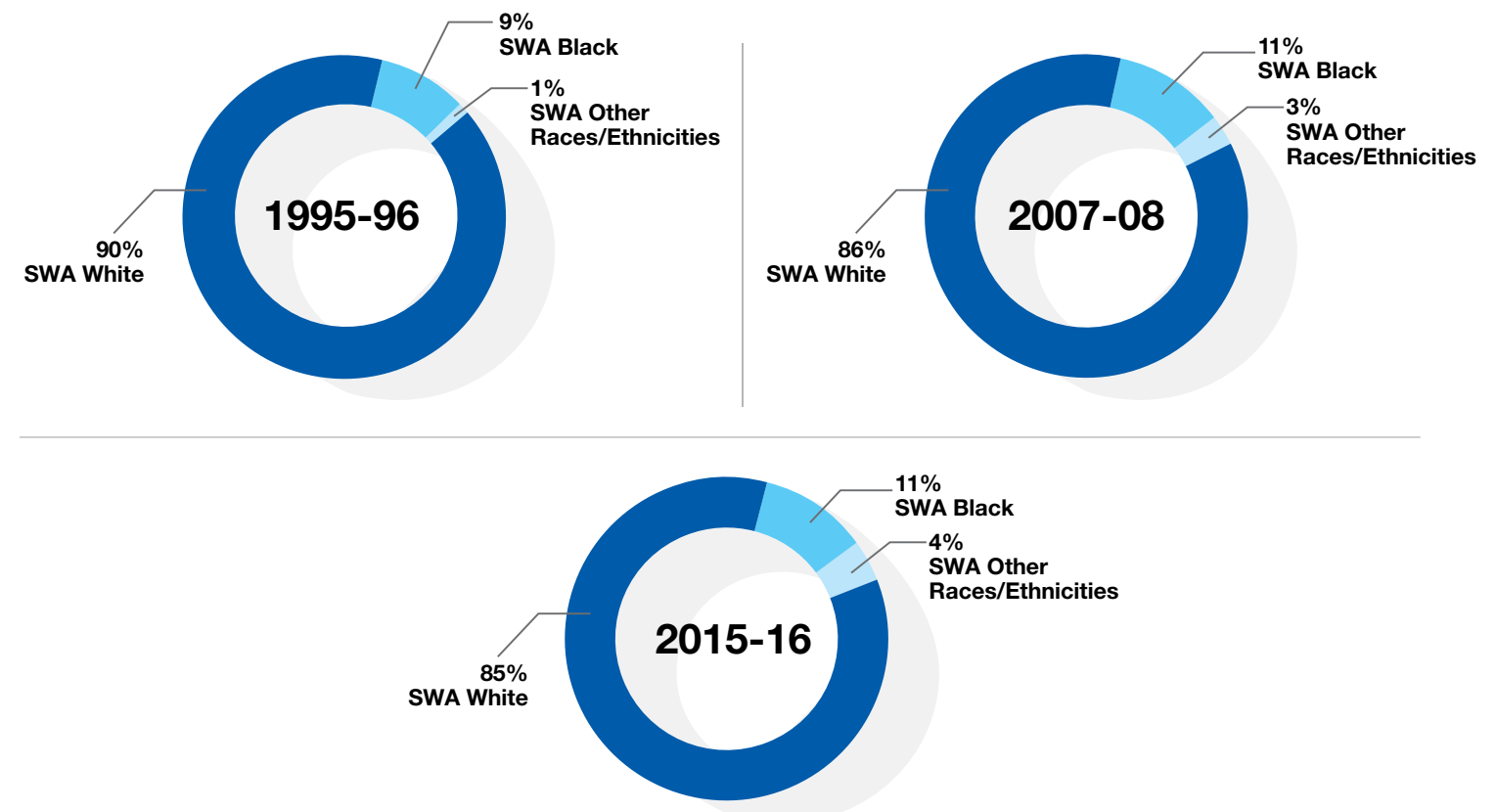
The SWA designation has enhanced representation of female experience and perspective at the institutional, conference and national levels. However, women remain under-represented in the most visible positions (AD, Head Coach, Commissioner and NCAA committee member). There is a lack of ethnic diversity in the SWA population.

The NCAA membership adopted the SWA designation in 1981, at the same time it was adding its women's championships. Simultaneously, female directors of athletics were being subsumed into combined athletics departments, usually led by male ADs. The percentage of female ADs has increased only minimally since 1995, the earliest year this data is available in the NCAA demographics database, with 20 percent of current ADs identifying as female. There has been slow growth in the percent of non-white ADs and non-white SWAs during the same time period. There has been only a slight increase in the percentage of ADs and SWAs from historically under-represented racial and ethnic backgrounds.

## ADs by Gender and Ethnicity



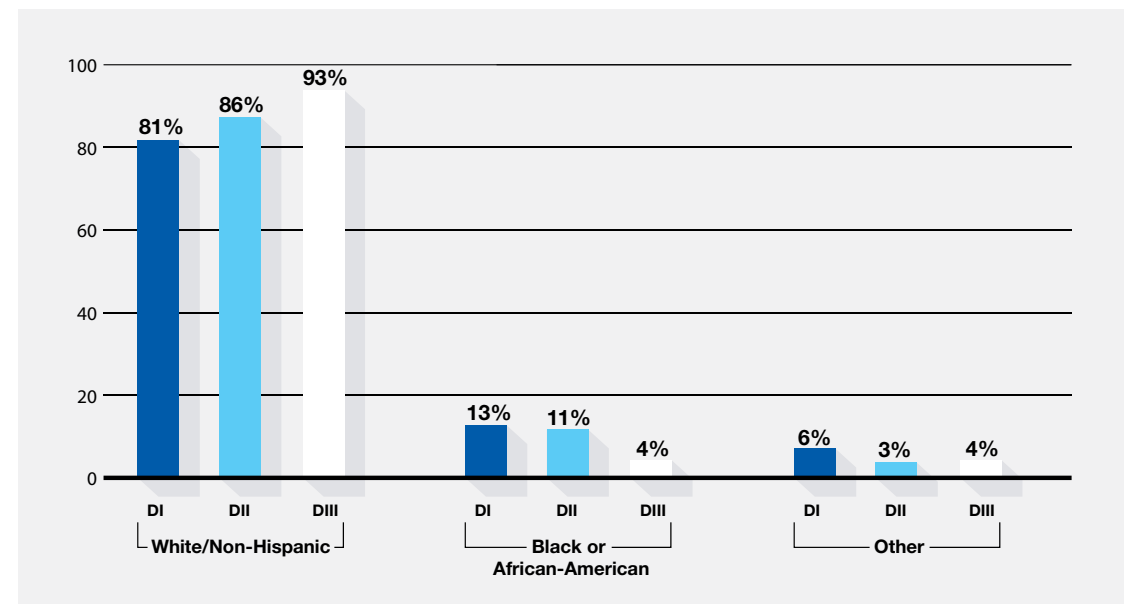
## SWAs by Ethnicity





## SWAs by Ethnicity by Divisions

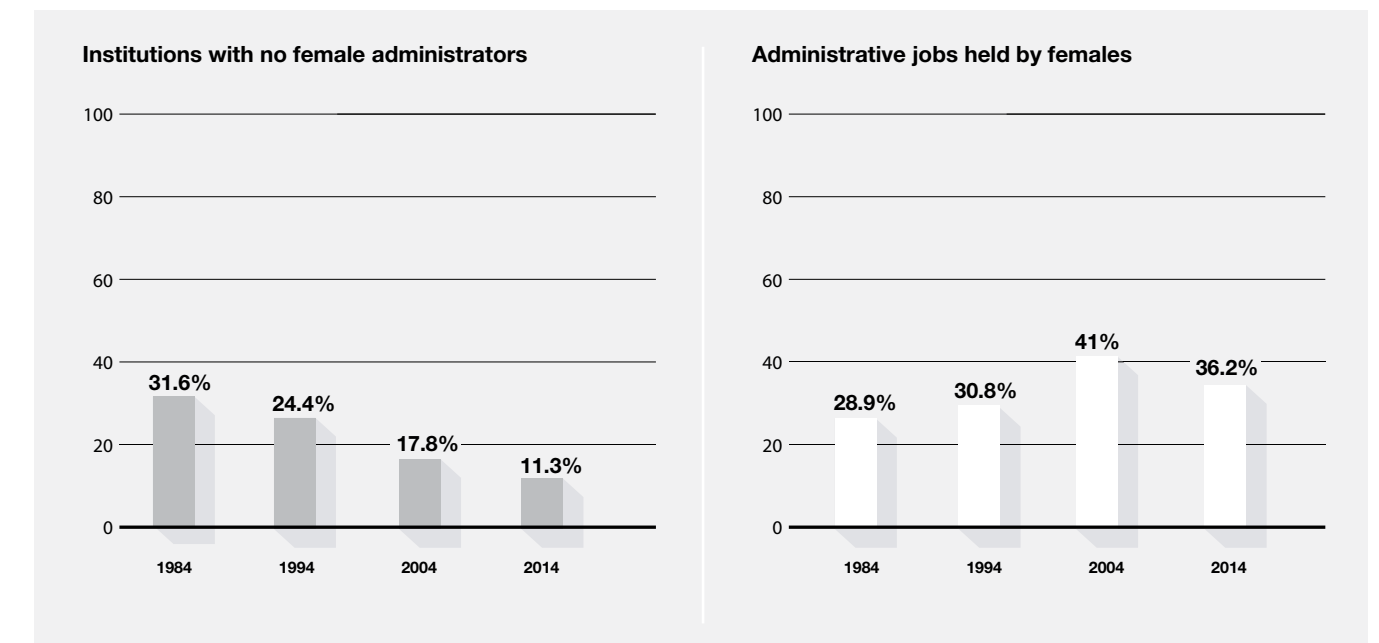
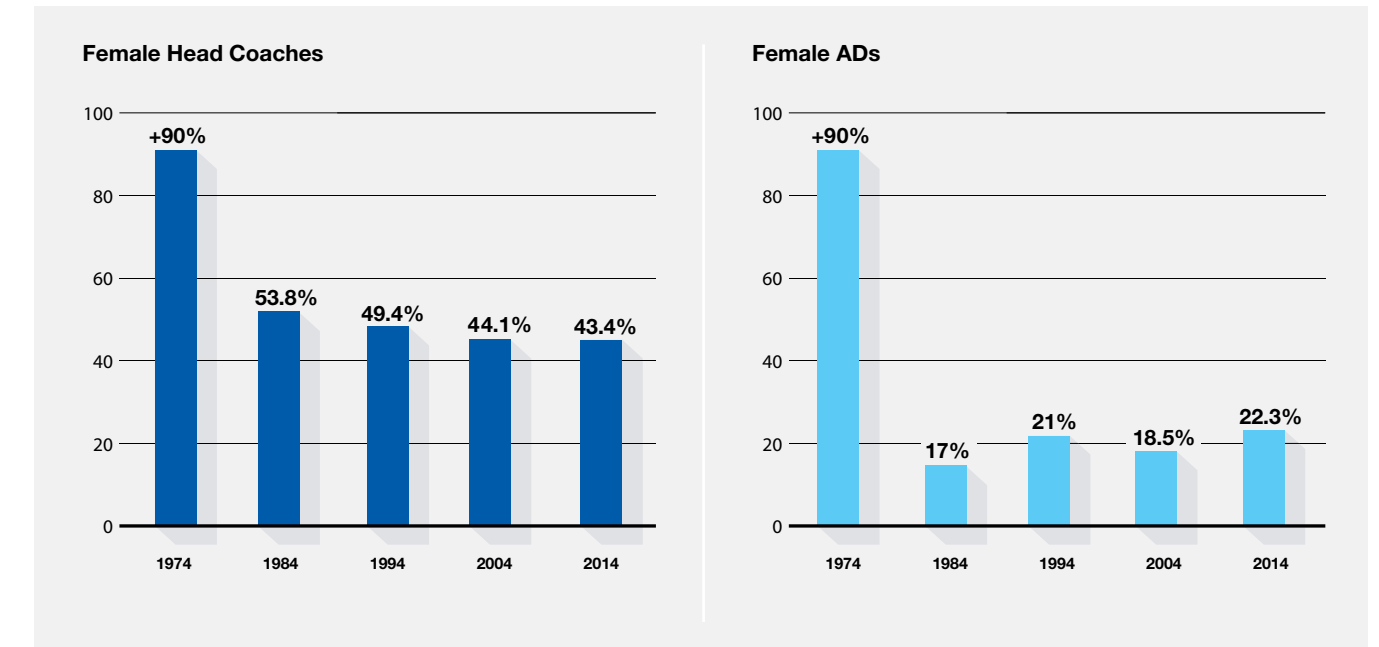
The racial and ethnic diversity of SWAs varies by division, per the following 2015-16 figures.



Almost half of the Black or African-Americans work at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

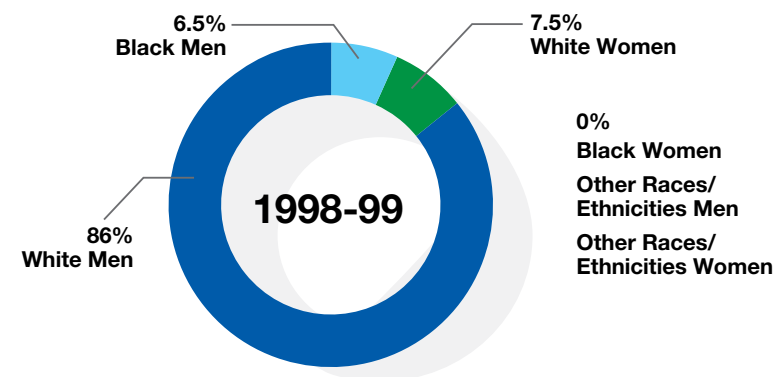
## A Longitudinal View of Women in Leadership Positions in Intercollegiate Athletics

Trend data show the percentage of female head coaches in women's college sports has been declining since the passage of Title IX in 1972. Data in the chart below is from R. Vivian Acosta and Linda Jean Carpenter, professors emerita at Brooklyn College. Methodology for that study – which began in 1977, and continued through 2014 – is different from the NCAA demographics database, as Acosta and Carpenter gathered the data directly from SWAs. The data is included in this report because it is the only publicly available information for the years before 1995.

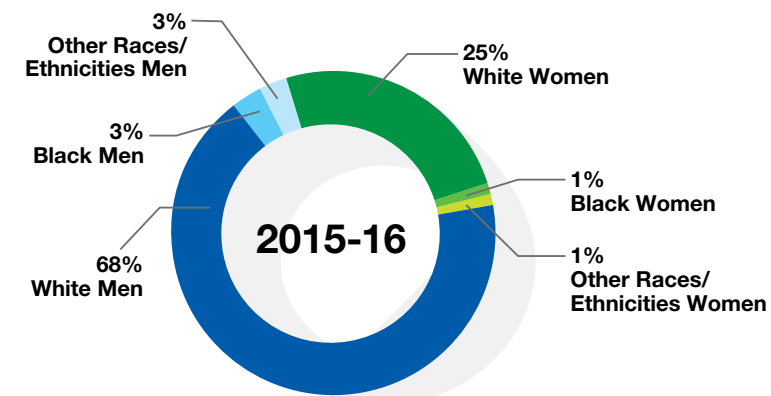


In contrast, the number of female conference commissioners, while still a significant minority, is rising. Ethnic minority representation among commissioners remains low. Data in the chart are from the NCAA demographics database, in which the oldest commissioner data is from 1998-99.

### Commissioners by Gender and Ethnicity



Total Men = 92.5% | Total Women = 7.5%

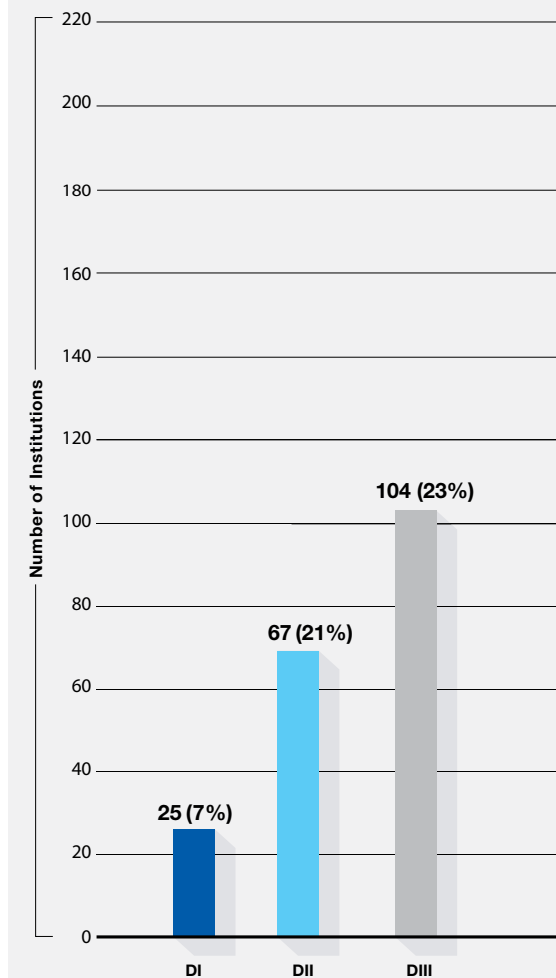


Total Men = 74% | Total Women = 27%

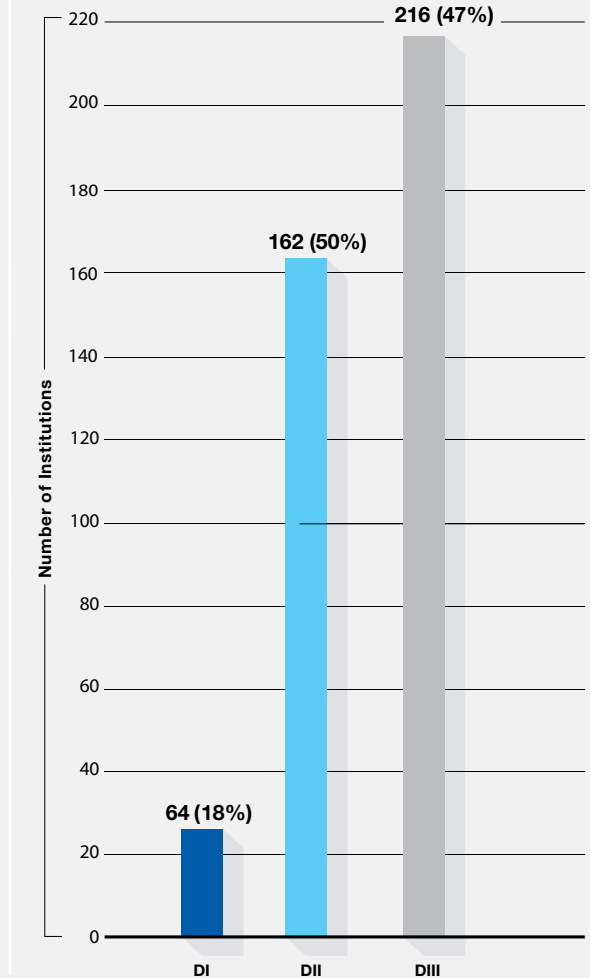
### Number of Women in Athletics Departments

Per the NCAA demographics database, in 2015-16, more than a quarter of athletics departments in Division I and approximately 70 percent of Divisions II and III had zero or one female with the title of assistant AD, associate AD or AD. Thirty-one percent of SWAs report that they are the only women on the athletics department senior management team on their campuses.

#### Number of Women Assistant AD, Associate AD, ADs = 0



#### Number of Women Assistant AD, Associate AD, ADs = 1

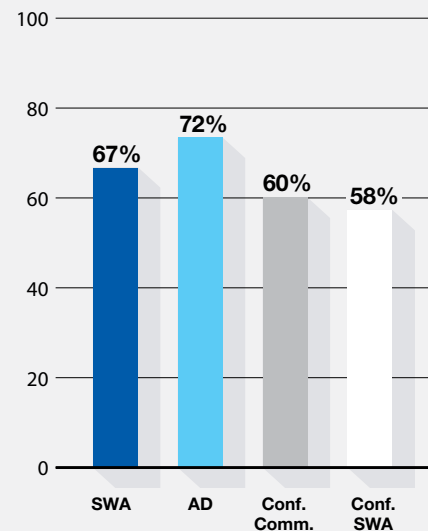


Titles such as Deputy AD are not options for selection in the NCAA demographics form, and it is left to the discretion of the institution to represent this female leader as an assistant or associate AD.

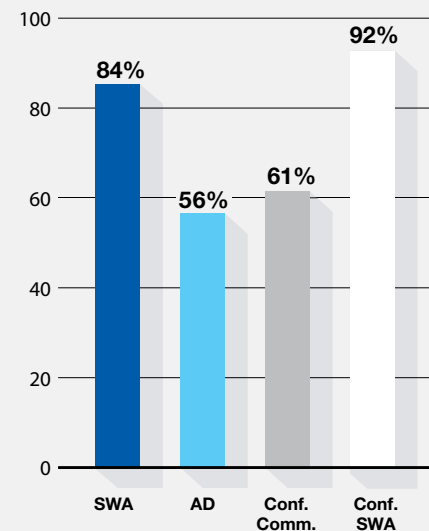


The majority of SWAs, ADs, commissioners and conference SWAs indicate the designation has helped increase the number of women involved in the management of intercollegiate athletics. Most believe that if the SWA designation did not exist, some institutions would have no women involved in the management of intercollegiate athletics. Institutional and conference SWAs indicate significantly higher levels of agreement with that assessment than ADs and commissioners.

**The SWA designation has resulted in an increase in the number of women involved in the management of intercollegiate athletics.**



**Without the SWA designation, some institutions would have no women involved in the management of their athletics program.**



## Percent of Women in the NCAA Governance Structure

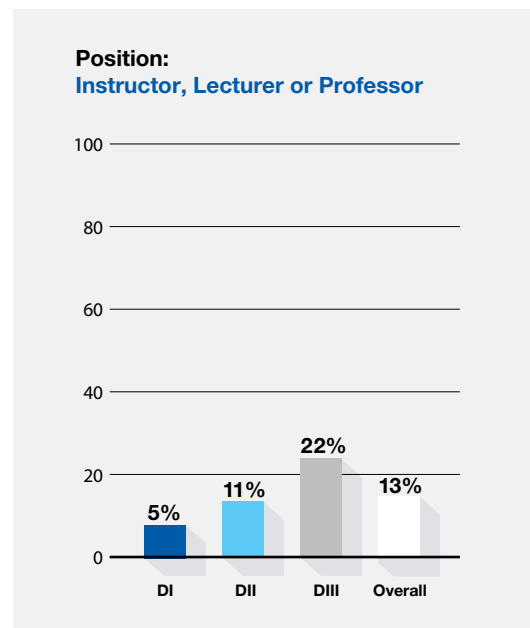
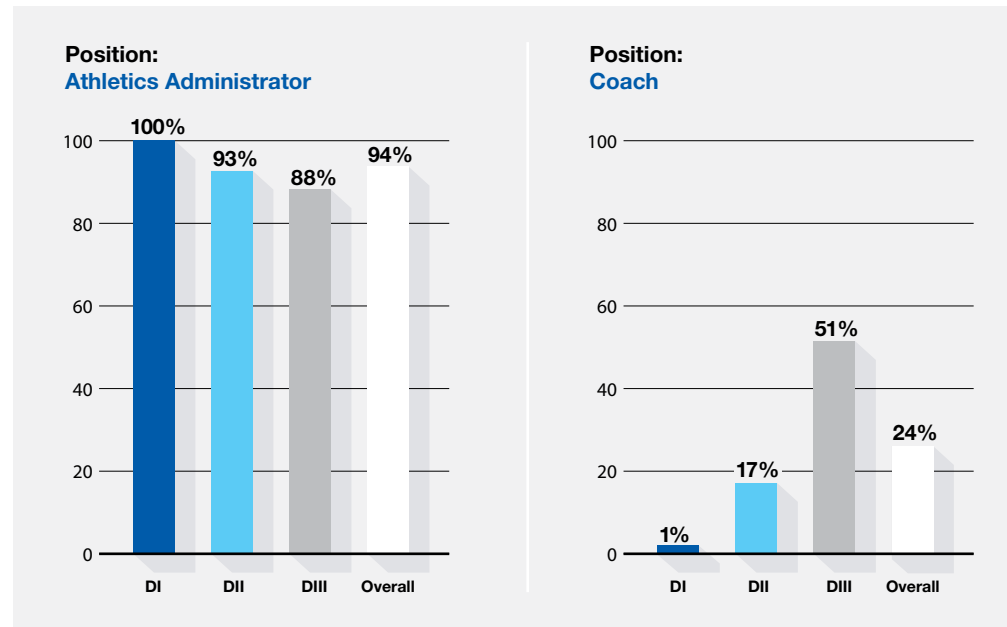
At the national level, the creation of the designation resulted in rapid growth of the number of women in the NCAA governance structure, going from almost none before 1981 to 35 percent of committee seats being held by women in 1985. However, that figure remains near 35 percent today. There are legislative requirements for gender and position minimums on NCAA committees; however, the number of seats reserved for SWAs is minimal, and divisional nominating bodies may or may not place an emphasis specifically on the designation when selecting people for committee membership.



# Experience of SWAs

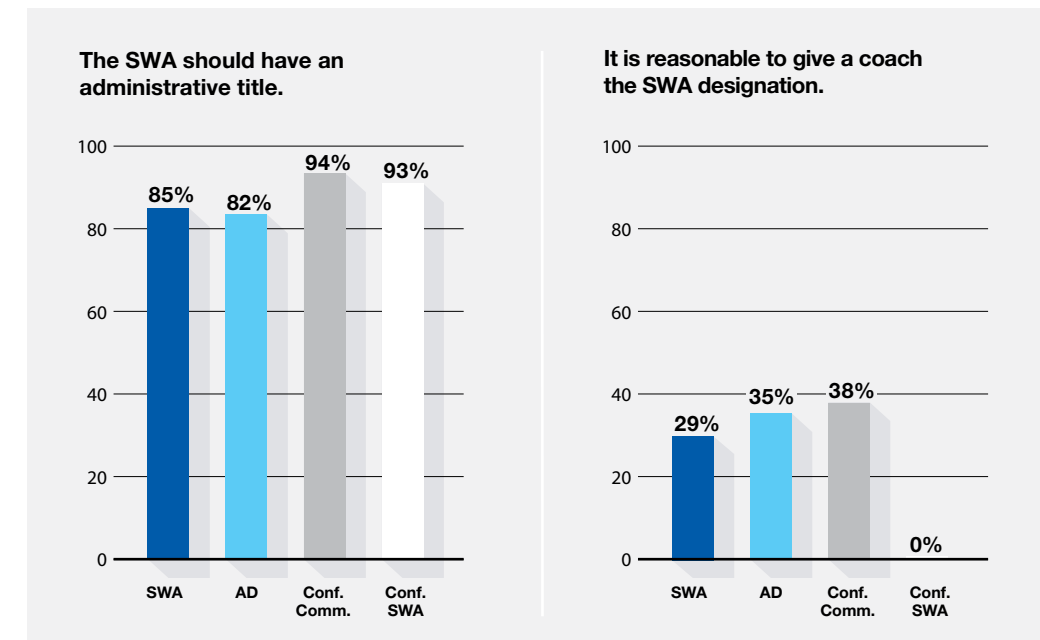
The experiences of SWAs vary greatly by division. While there are perceptual challenges related to the role, most SWAs find the designation to be desirable, and that it helps to advance their career.

Most SWAs report holding a position of athletics administrator. Higher-level administrative titles occur in Division I, and Division III SWAs have a greater likelihood of holding coaching, instructor and other administrative roles than their counterparts in the other divisions.

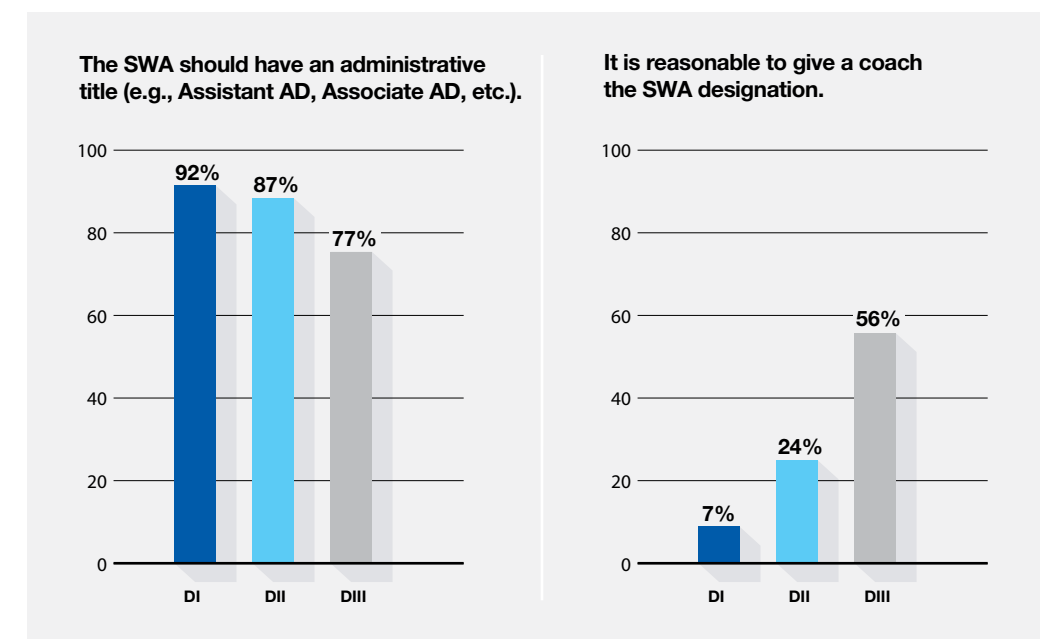


## SWA and Administrative Titles

There is general agreement that SWAs should have an administrative title and only limited agreement that it is appropriate for a coach to serve as SWA, with support coming largely from Division III.



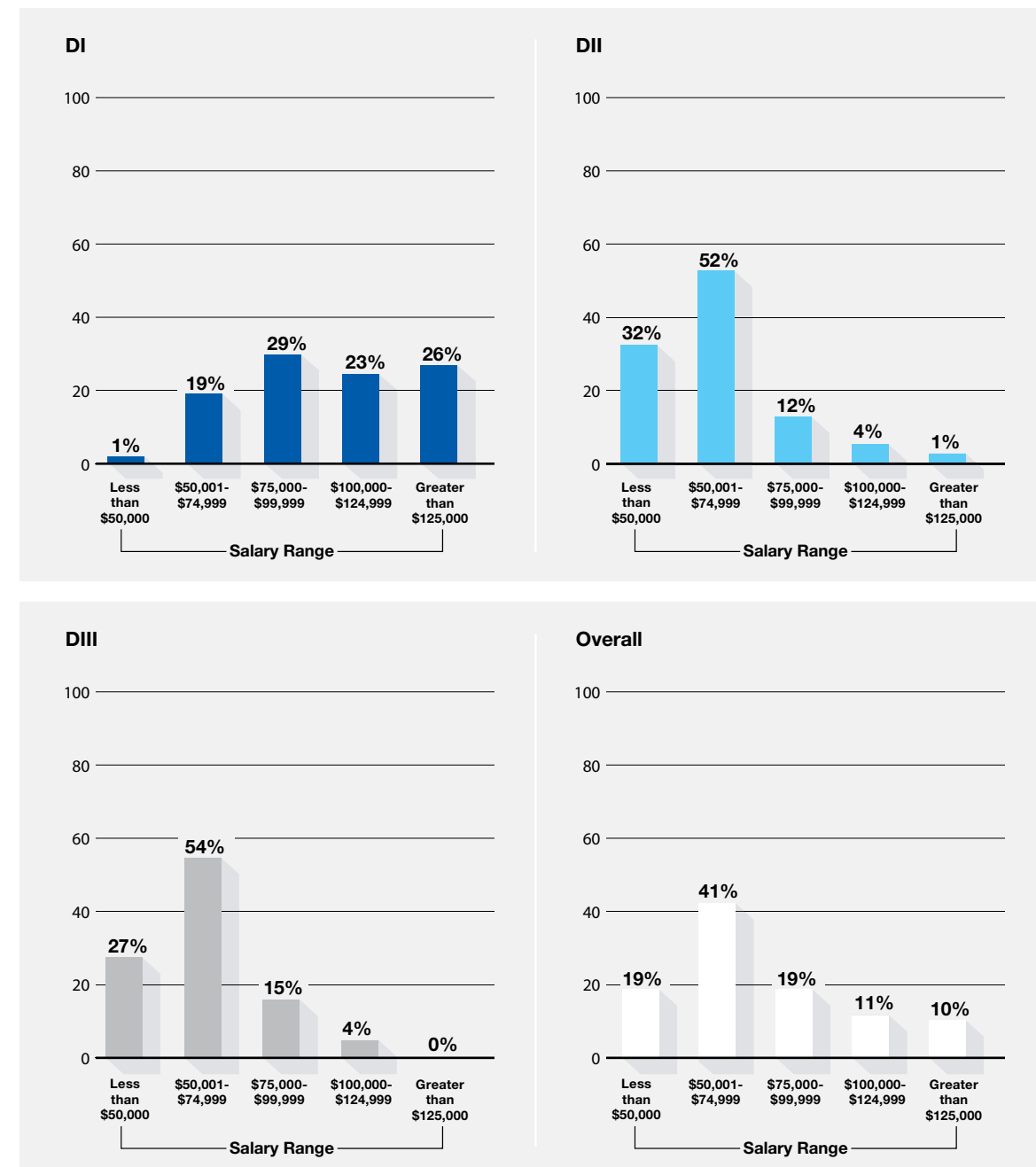
### SWA Responses By Division





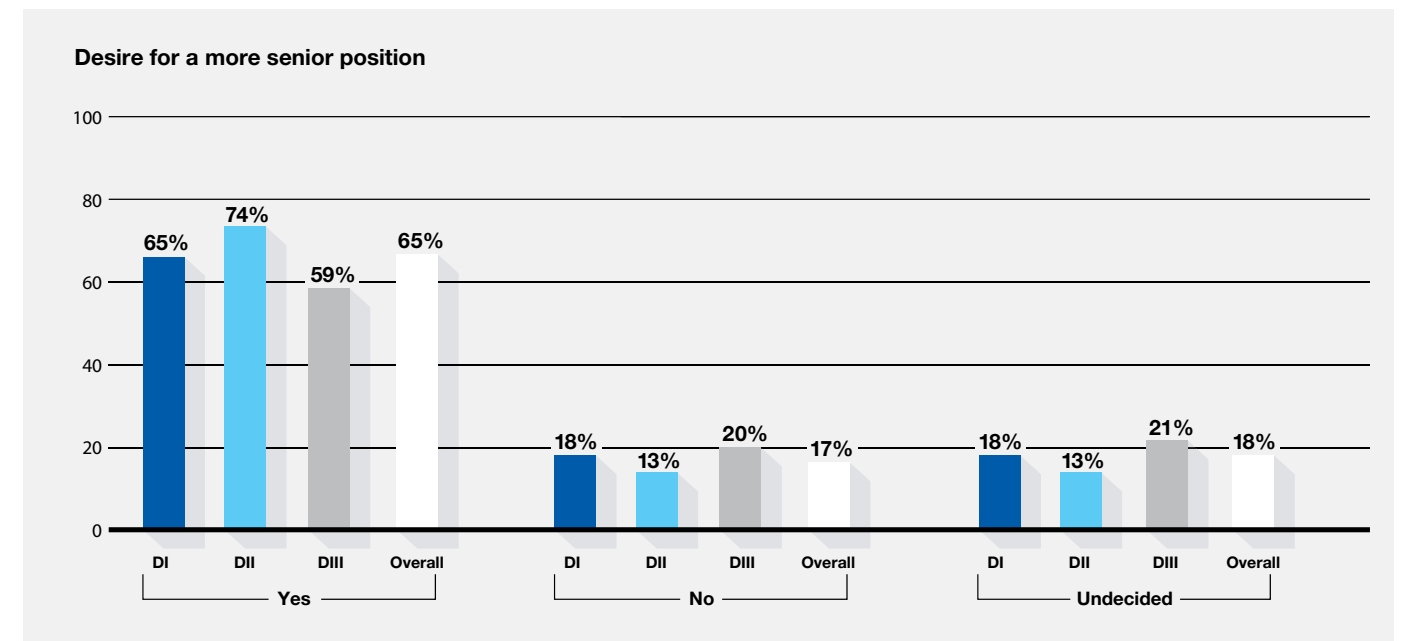
## SWA Salaries

SWA salaries vary by division, with the largest salaries occurring in Division I.



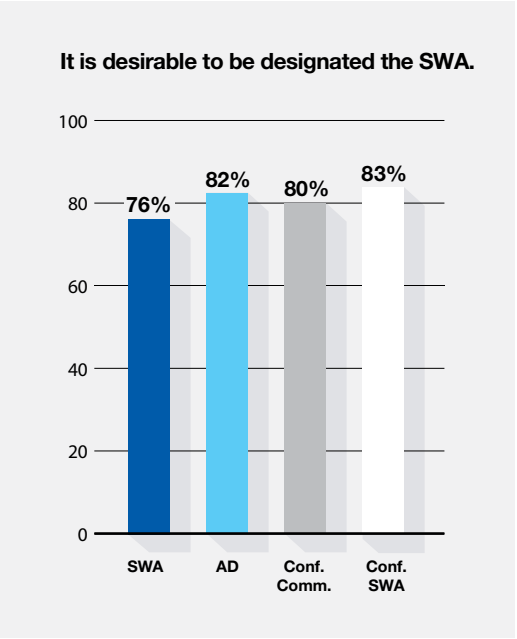
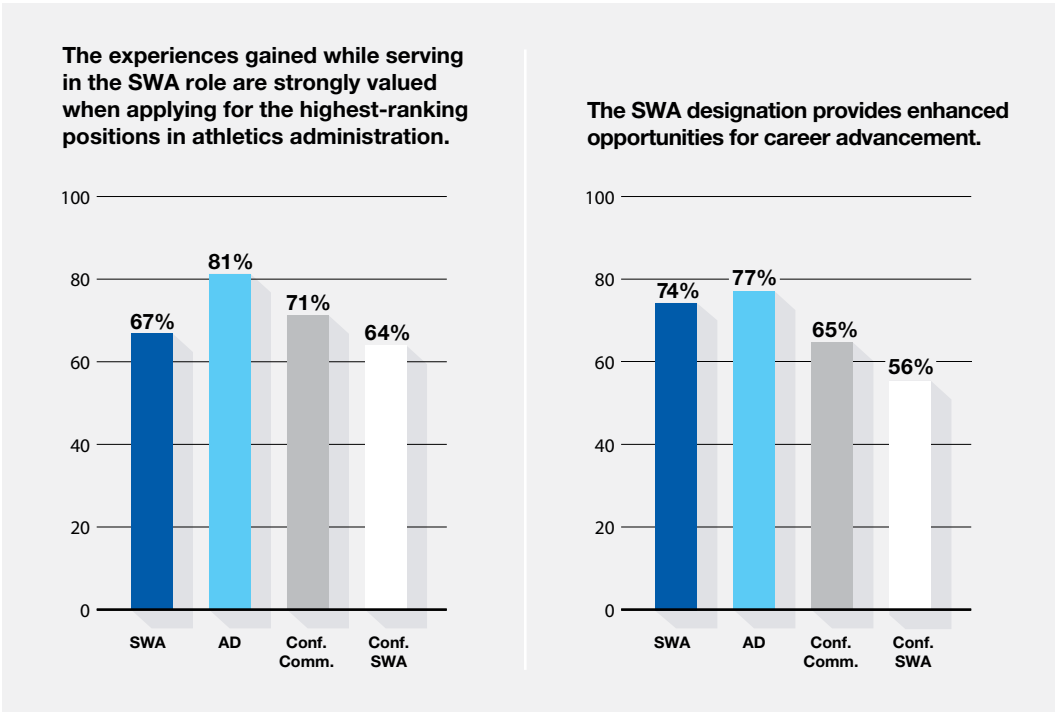
## Career Advancement

Most SWAs desire a more senior position.





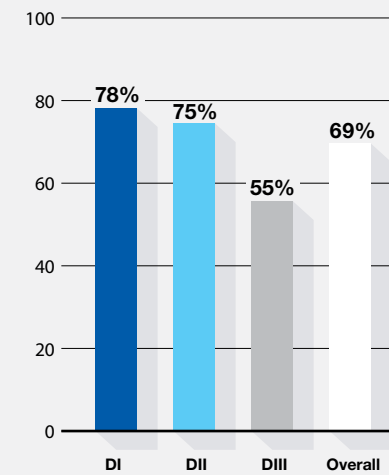
In general, SWAs believe that the designation provides enhanced opportunities for advancement, and that it is desirable to be designated the SWA. ADs, commissioners and conference SWAs generally agree.



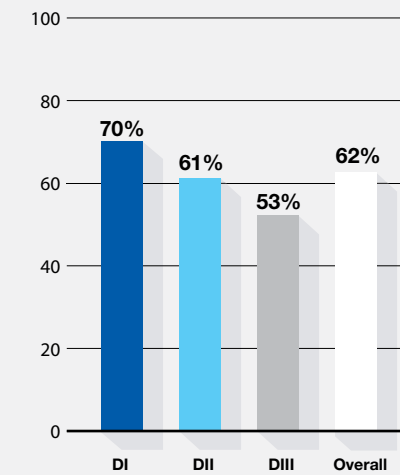
Most SWAs report that their career advancement was positively impacted by having the SWA designation and that the designation provides access to information or opportunities they might not have otherwise. Once again, divisional differences are evident with Division I SWAs indicating the highest level of agreement, followed by Divisions II and III, respectively. However, some SWAs report having duties or responsibilities related to the designation that may hinder their advancement, with Division I SWAs indicating this more frequently than colleagues from the other two divisions. The survey results do not identify specific duties that may have a negative impact, but some interviewees suggested that being the only one expected to address gender equity, and a general internal focus, could be a hindrance to advancement.

Also, while a majority of SWAs do not believe other women's (non-SWAs) career trajectories are impacted by the existence of the designation, some note that the limit of one SWA per school and the misperception that SWAs only oversee women's sports may discourage some women from pursuing the SWA designation. SWAs have the opportunity to mentor and advocate for other women within the department, which can have a positive impact on female colleagues' career trajectory.

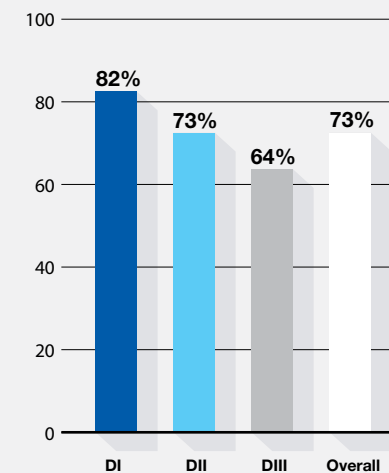
**SWA agreement that the SWA designation has positively impacted her career advancement.**



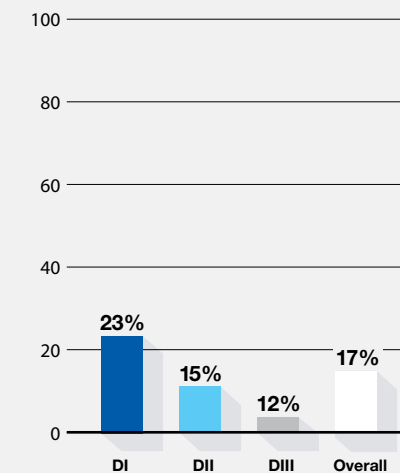
**SWA agreement that her current roles and responsibilities as an SWA are marketable toward a more senior position.**



**SWA agreement that the designation provides her with access to information or opportunities she might not have otherwise.**



**SWA agreement that, as a result of her SWA designation, she has duties or areas of responsibilities that may hinder her path to advancement.**



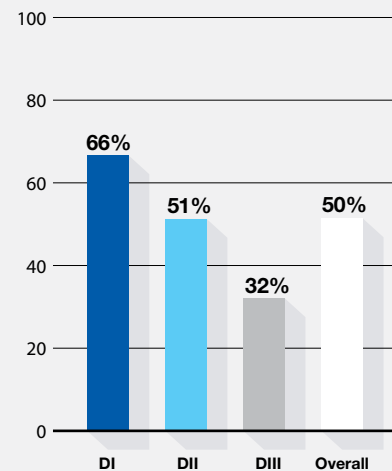


# Role Clarity

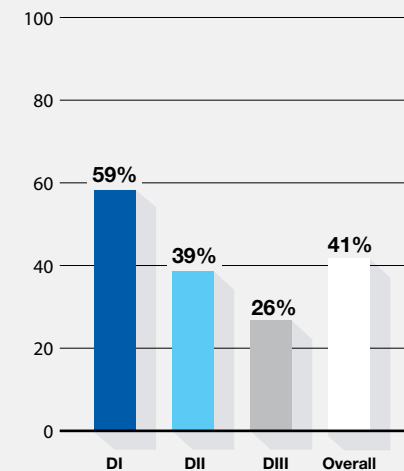
**There is a significant lack of understanding of the SWA role by the women who hold it, as well as by all other key constituent groups in intercollegiate athletics. Few SWAs receive training specific to the role.**

SWAs report ambiguity or lack of understanding about the SWA role on their campus, in their conference and within the NCAA. Less than half believe their AD understands the SWA role. More generally, they report low levels of understanding about the SWA role by student-athletes, coaches, other athletics administrators, presidents and other campus personnel.

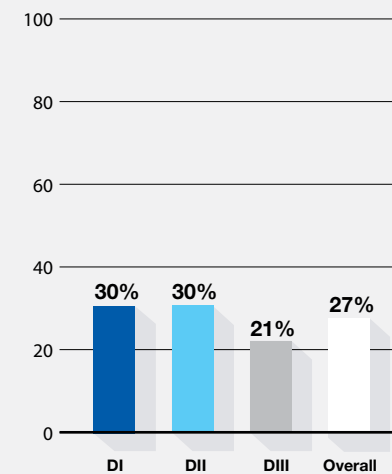
**SWA Response:**  
I understand my SWA role at my institution.



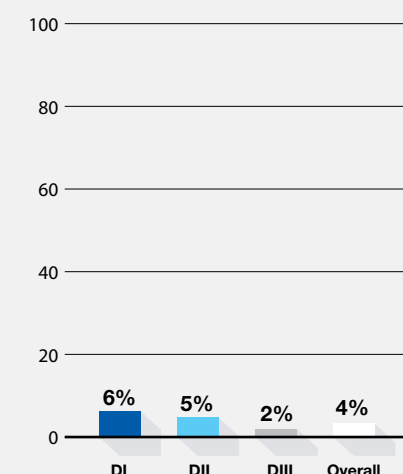
**SWA Response:**  
I understand my SWA role in my conference.



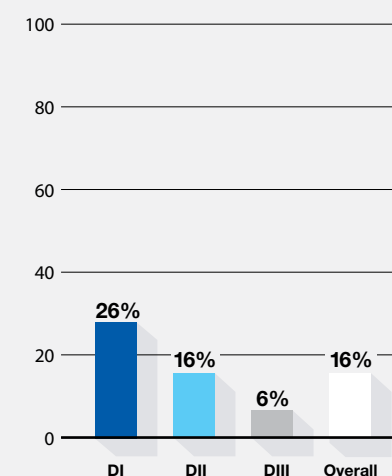
**SWA Response:**  
I understand my SWA role within the NCAA.



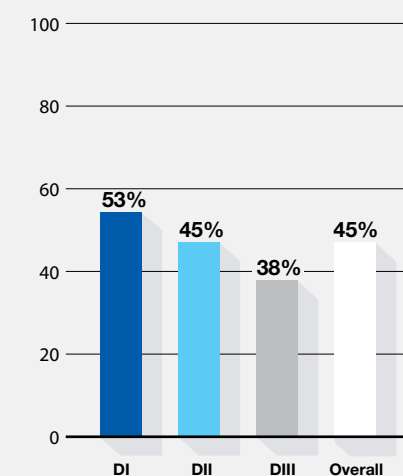
**SWA Response:**  
Student-athletes understand the SWA role at my institution.



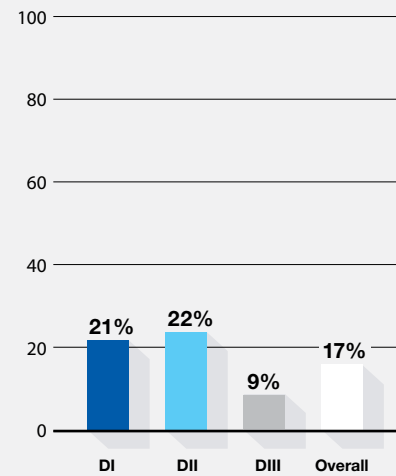
**SWA Response:**  
Coaches understand the SWA role at my institution.



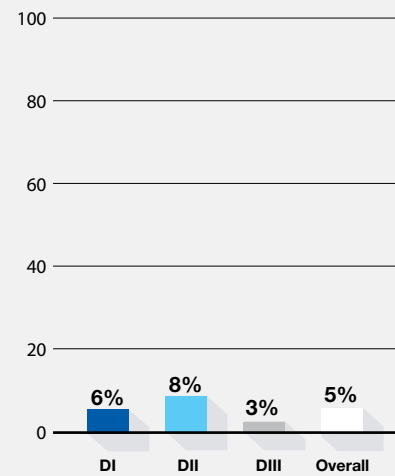
**SWA Response:**  
The director of athletics understands the SWA role at my institution.



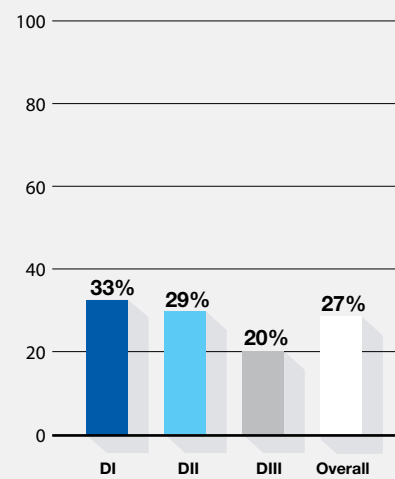
**SWA Response:**  
The chancellor or president  
understands the SWA role at my  
institution.



**SWA Response:**  
Other university administrators  
understand the SWA role at my  
institution.



**SWA Response:**  
Other athletics administrators  
understand the SWA role at my  
institution.

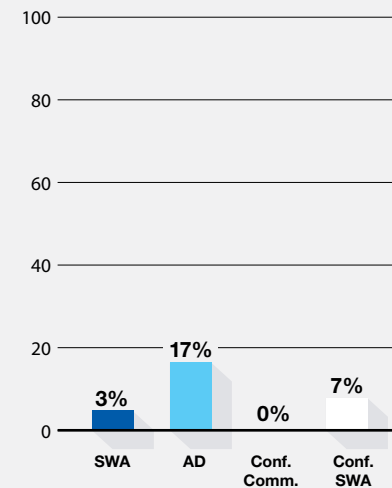


## Constituent Perception

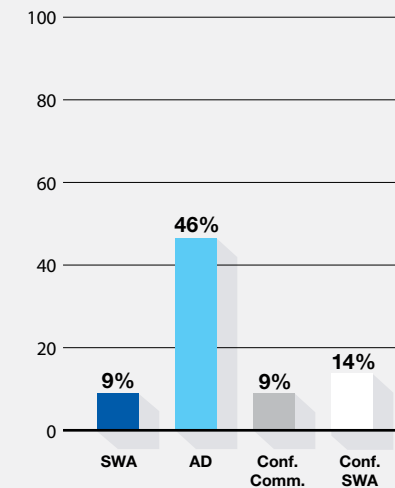
When asked about perception not specific to their own campus, ADs and SWAs indicated that the understanding of the SWA role is low. However, there are considerable differences between ADs and SWAs about the extent to which specific groups understand the SWA role, especially student-athletes, coaches and other athletics administrators. One of the largest perception gaps occurred between ADs and SWAs and their understanding of the SWA role: while 92 percent of ADs report understanding it, just 45 percent of SWAs report having an AD that understands the SWA role on campus.

Similar to SWAs, commissioners and conference SWAs report low levels of understanding of the SWA role in general among all constituent groups. None of the commissioner respondents agreed that student-athletes understand the role; conference SWAs indicate the same when it comes to chancellors or presidents, and other university administrators.

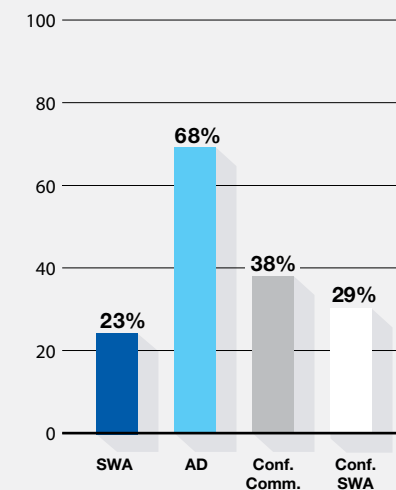
**Student-athletes understand the  
SWA role.**

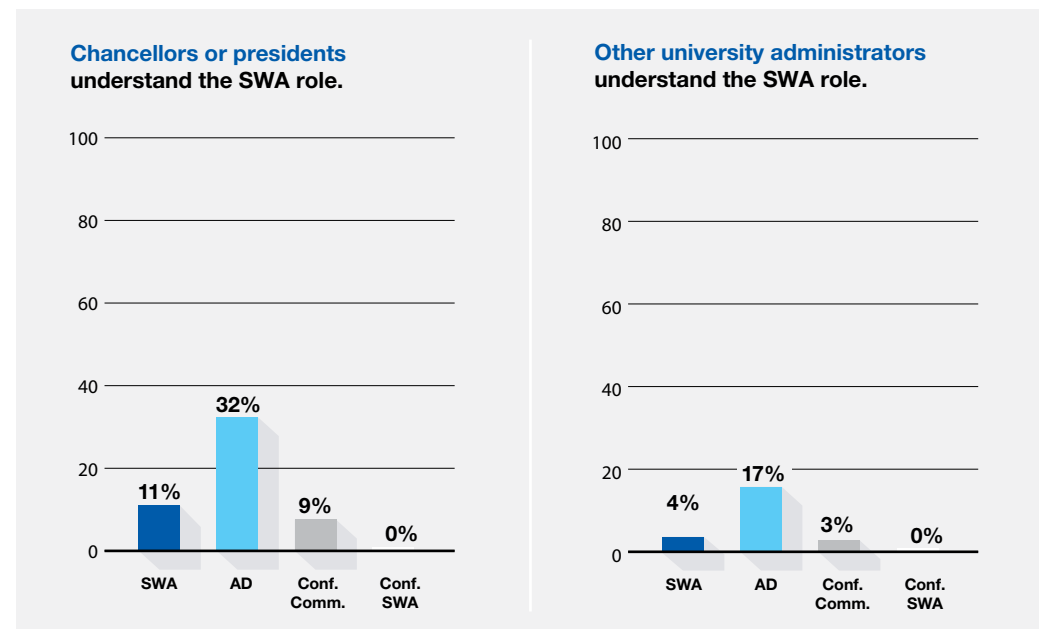


**Coaches understand the SWA role.**



**Athletics administrators understand  
the SWA role.**





## There are many points of confusion about the general meaning and distinction of the designation.

Many people refer to the designation as the senior women's administrator, implying that the purpose of the designation is to oversee women's sports. There appear to be institutions that designate the longest-serving woman as SWA, and not the highest ranking. Eighty-two percent of SWAs report that they are the highest-ranking females in the athletics department.

### What the designation is NOT:

- A required position
- Oversight of only women's athletics
- Only for the longest-serving or oldest woman in the athletics department

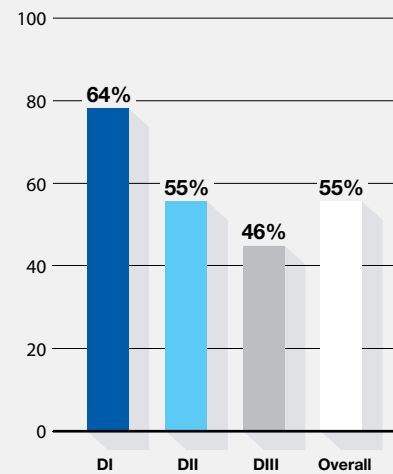
Many people think that the designation is a required position in an athletics department. Not only is it illegal to limit the gender of the person filling a specific job, but also the NCAA constitution only defines the term; it does not require the institution to have one. However, 99 percent of NCAA schools appoint an SWA. A person meeting the constitutional definition of senior woman administrator is eligible to receive the benefits ascribed to the SWA in NCAA bylaws (such as serving on specific committees, participating in eligibility hearings and appealing staff rules interpretations). Also, the SWA receives correspondence from the NCAA national office, is eligible to receive select grant funding and professional development opportunities, and can make nominations for select NCAA awards and programs.



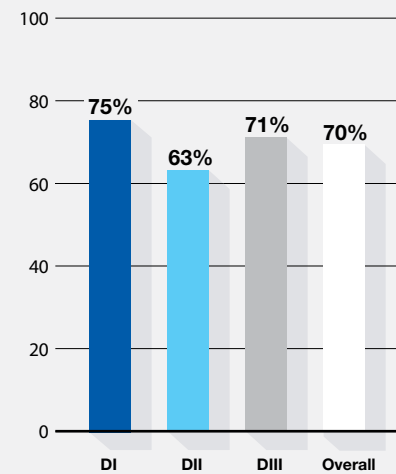
## Training

**Not only is understanding of the role low, but SWAs are not receiving training about the role.** While more than half of SWAs report receiving institutional support for general professional development, the majority indicates receiving no training specific to the SWA role.

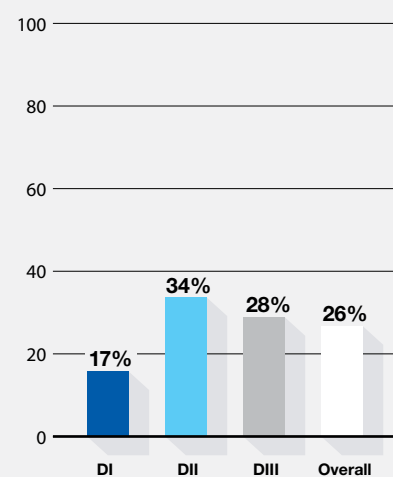
**My institution seeks to support my career advancement through professional development or other training opportunities.**



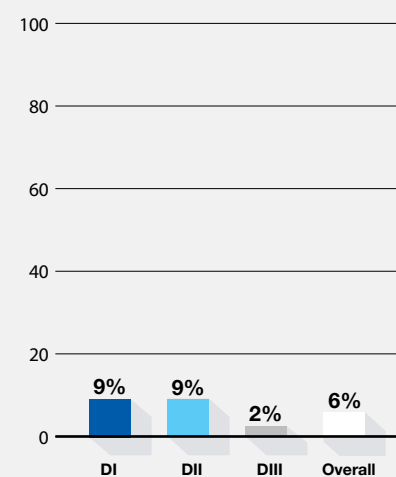
**No training specific to the SWA role.**



**SWA training while at this institution.**



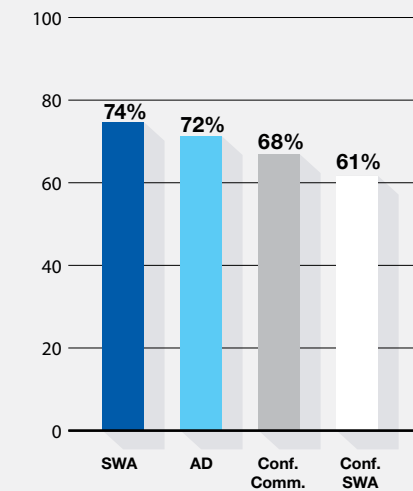
**SWA training while at another institution.**



## Specific Responsibilities

Finally, there is general agreement that the SWA designation should have specific responsibilities.

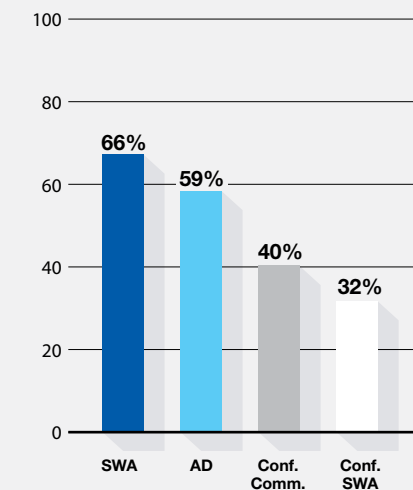
**The SWA designation should have specific duties.**



## Responsibility for Gender Equity Compliance

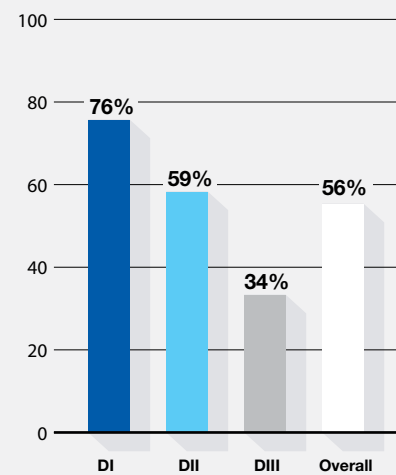
The NCAA SWA Best Practices brochure states that part of the role of the SWA is to strategize ways to support and manage gender equity and Title IX plans and issues, and to review the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act Report and the Gender Equity Plan. There were different levels of agreement regarding whether the SWA should have this responsibility with commissioners and conference SWAs indicating lower levels of agreement than ADs and SWAs.

**The SWA should have specific gender equity responsibilities.**

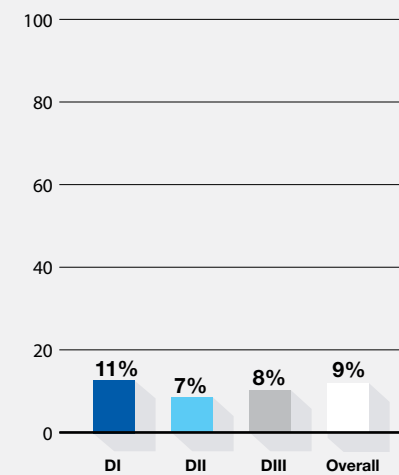


Interviews conducted for this study suggested that if the SWA bears the sole responsibility for gender equity compliance, perception of her decision-making involvement may be limited to issues of gender equity. Many SWAs report having gender equity responsibility or oversight, with fewer reporting that they have sole responsibility. There are significant divisional differences observed.

**SWAs responding that they are responsible for gender equity compliance or oversight on their campus.**



**SWAs responding that gender equity compliance is solely their responsibility (of those who responded that they had gender equity responsibilities)**







# Opportunities

Opportunities to enhance the impact of the SWA designation and the experience of the women holding the designation were generated from responses to the membership survey and analysis of information included in this report. NCAA membership committees such as the Committee on Women's Athletics will be working during the next year to create actions items for these identified opportunities.



## Clarify the purpose of the designation

Define clear guidelines and expectations for the role at the institutional, conference and national levels. Establish goals for the designation, including for the experiences of women holding the designation. Examine if the title “senior woman administrator” is appropriate in light of any revisions to the purpose; the concept of rebranding the SWA designation received about 60 percent support from SWAs, ADs and commissioners. Consider increasing requirements for SWAs on committees, and establishing expectations for SWAs to have administrative titles.

## Communicate the purpose of the designation

Completion of this study presents an opportunity to correct misperceptions about the role, and to reduce the perceptual gaps between SWAs and their ADs, commissioners and conference SWAs. Communication should include tailored messages for different audiences as guided by the knowledge gaps exhibited in the survey. If the purpose of the SWA designation continues to include an emphasis on representing women’s interests, then coaches and student-athletes should be target audiences for this communication. With the continued expectation for SWAs to serve in key senior management positions, institutional decision-makers (e.g., presidents/ chancellors, ADs and athletics direct reports) should be educated about the purpose and benefits of active involvement of SWAs specifically and women more generally.

## Measure the experiences of women holding the designation

Conduct a brief, regular survey addressing specific metrics related to goals for the designation.

## Address low representation of ethnic minority women within the SWA population

Across divisions, women of color are poorly represented among SWAs and other leadership positions. The unique challenges facing ethnic minority women, and their unique needs, should be addressed in any resource produced as a result of this study.

## Acknowledge and accommodate divisional differences

Describe the purpose of the designation in all divisions and in any related professional development programming. Highlights of divisional differences include:

- Roles on campus vary across divisions with Division III SWAs holding multiple roles (e.g., coach, lecturer) more often than Divisions I and II SWAs, which could limit permissible time off campus for professional development or committee service.
- Decision-making and areas of responsibility vary, with Division I SWAs indicating the highest level of meaningful involvement in decision-making, followed by Division II and Division III, respectively.
- Divisions II and III SWAs tend to have fewer years of experience in intercollegiate athletics upon SWA appointment than their Division I counterparts.
- Division III SWAs indicate the lowest level of role understanding and the least impact on their career advancement (different from the other divisions by at least 20 percent).
- Reported salaries are significantly higher in Division I, creating an enhanced need for financial assistance to attend professional development programs for Divisions II and III SWAs.

## Offer professional development programming to train SWAs

Develop best practices for SWAs to optimize their role and best practices for career management in intercollegiate athletics. Provide appropriate funding and support for women from all divisions to access these opportunities. Address the lack of exposure to major financial decision-making and oversight of football and men’s basketball in this training. Finally, examine what professional development resources exist within and outside of the NCAA and customize the programming for the audience of SWAs.



# History of the Designation

NCAA.org and the 2011 NCAA SWA best practices brochure both cite the purpose of the designation is to “encourage and promote the involvement of female administrators in meaningful ways in the decision-making process in intercollegiate athletics. The designation is intended to enhance representation of female experience and perspective at the institutional, conference and national levels and support women’s interests. Her daily responsibilities can include any department tasks and must include senior management team responsibilities.”

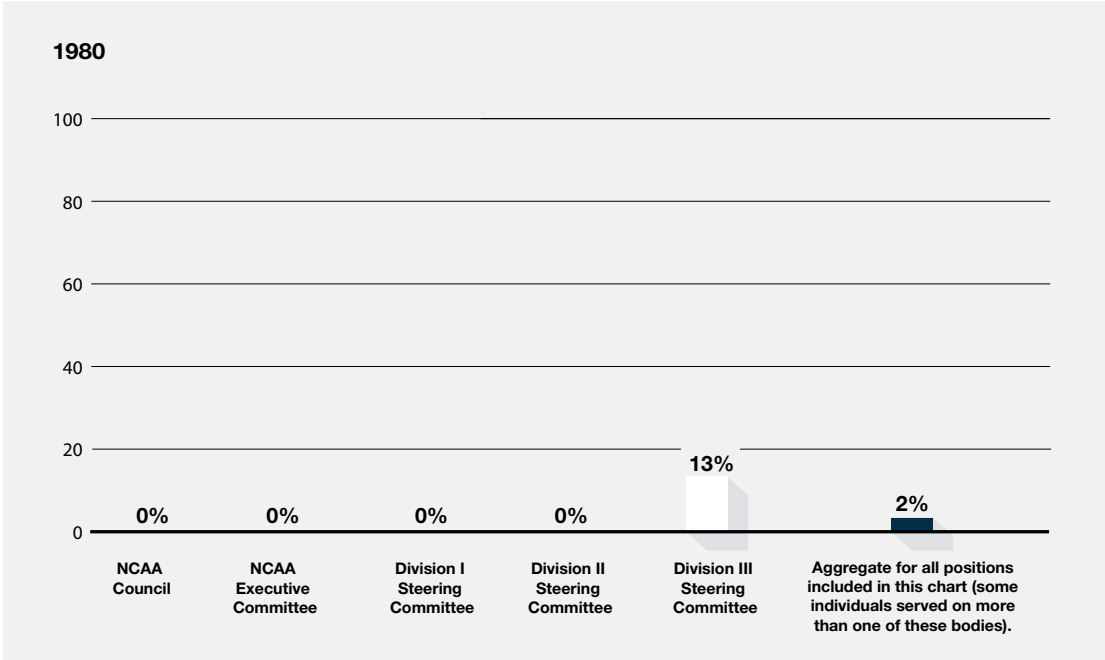
The designation originated at the 1981 NCAA Convention, when Proposal No. 51 amended the Constitution to establish a minimum number of women serving on the major governance bodies at the time (NCAA Council, Executive Committee and division Steering Committees). As such, the original purpose of the designation was to identify women that could serve on NCAA committees, using the term “primary woman administrator of athletic programs.”

The proposal passed with a vote of 383 to 168, with Convention floor discussion focused on NCAA committee makeup, and not on the role of women in campus or conference decision-making. Some thought leaders from women’s athletics spoke on the Convention floor to oppose the proposal as part of the resistance to the way the NCAA was taking over women’s championships and the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) itself, and there was a general confounding of the issues of offering women’s championships and requiring a minimum level of participation in the governance structure.

The proposal established a minimum of 20 percent women on the NCAA Council (four of 22 positions), 20 percent on the Executive Committee (two of 12 positions), and 30 percent on the division Steering Committees (six of 20 positions in Division I, and three of 10 positions in Divisions II and III). Convention records indicate that the minimum standards were based on proportional representation of male and female teams at NCAA member institutions at the time, and there were statements indicating that the minimums were to be examined over time for appropriateness. Roundtable discussions before the business session included the concern by some that the minimums reflected only token representation, and should be closer to 50 percent of each gender. Related to this, there was an amendment that would have established minimums of 30 percent for the NCAA Council and Executive Committee (Proposal No. 52), but that was defeated.

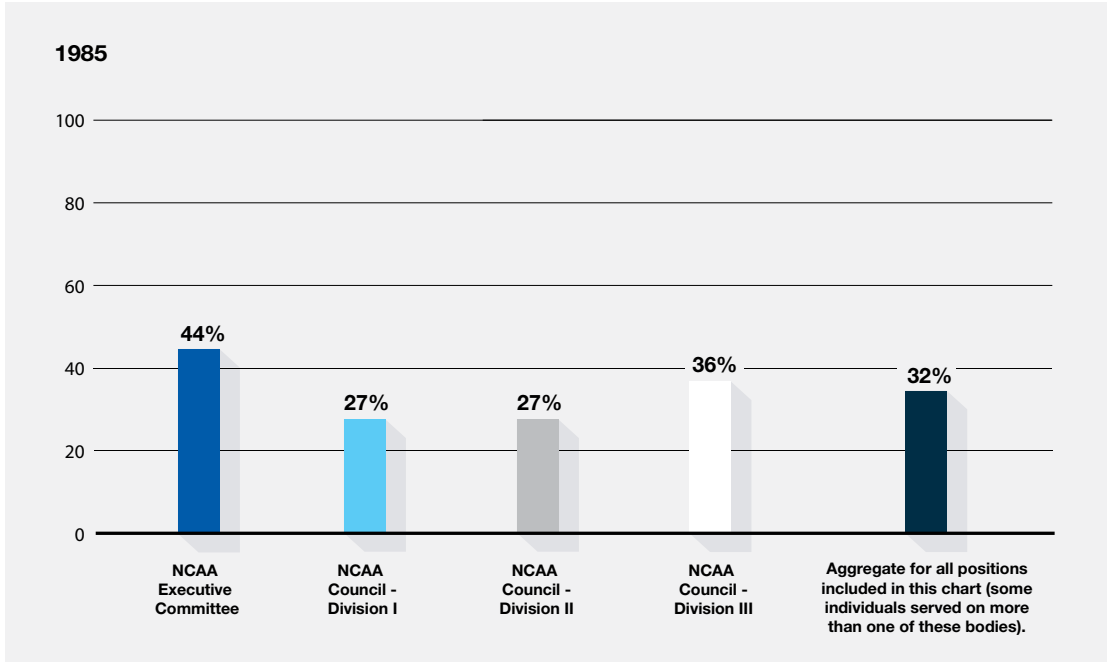
While the committee records from this period are not complete, the existing records do suggest that about 35 percent of committee seats were held by women in 1985, four years after the original action to add women to the governance structure.

The following chart illustrates the percent of positions held by women on the governance bodies referenced in 1981 Proposal No. 51:

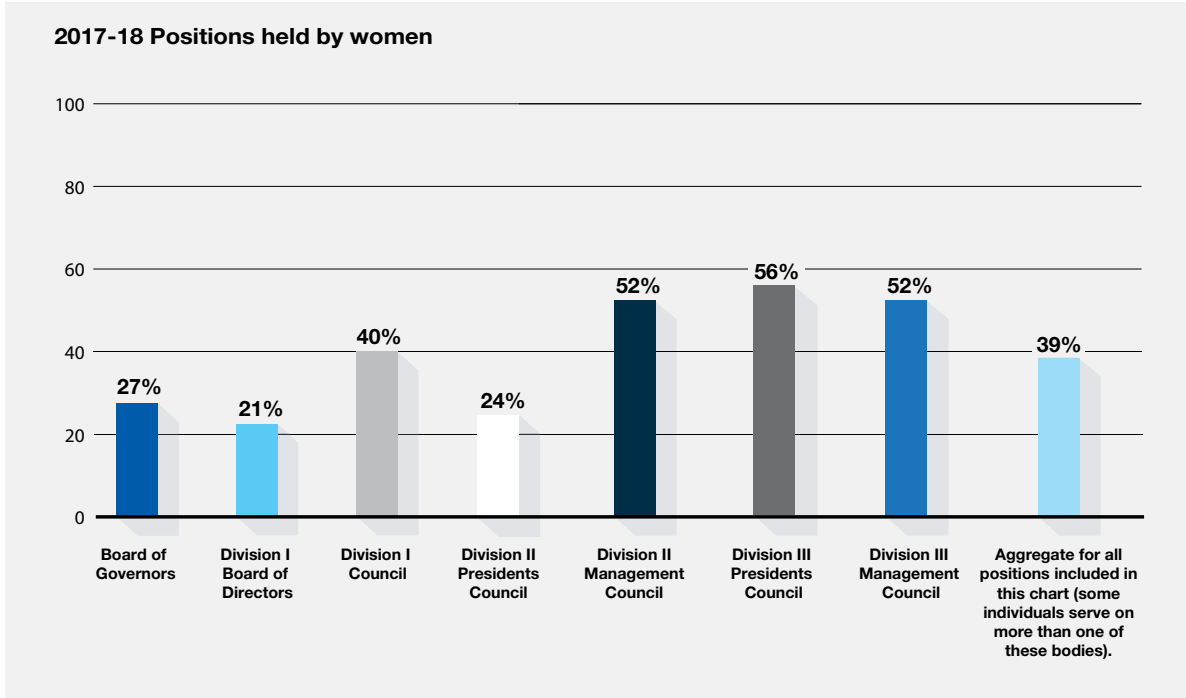




The governance structure had changed by 1985, and included the following leadership bodies, each showing the percent of positions being held by women in 1985:



The aggregate figure for the entire governance structure remains near 35 percent in 2017-18. The chart below illustrates the leadership of the current governance structure, which has been amended multiple times since 1985.



The legislated definition for the senior woman administrator was first included in the NCAA Manual in 1989-90, when the NCAA manuals were reformatted. The definition was based on membership understanding of a common term, and not the result of the membership voting on a proposal. The original definition stated, “A senior woman administrator is the highest-ranking female involved in the conduct of a member institution’s intercollegiate athletics program.” This also is the time when the reference changed from “primary woman administrator” to “senior woman administrator.” The legislated definition was altered periodically between 1989 and 2006, when the membership adopted a common provision (requiring the definition to be the same in all three divisions) that remains in place in 2017-18. This changed the reference from the SWA being involved in the “conduct” of intercollegiate athletics to the “management” of intercollegiate athletics. It also stated for all divisions that institutions may designate a different female the SWA if the institution has a female director of athletics.

### 4.02.4.1 Institutional Senior Woman Administrator.

An institutional senior woman administrator is the highest-ranking female involved in the management of an institution’s intercollegiate athletics program. An institution with a female director of athletics may designate a different female involved in the management of the member’s program as a fifth representative to the NCAA governance structure.

Also, Division I adopted a definition for the conference senior woman administrator, effective in 2002-03, which it amended in December 2005 to arrive at the definition that remains in place in 2017-18.

### 4.02.4.2 Conference Senior Woman Administrator.

A conference senior woman administrator is the highest-ranking female involved with the conduct and policy processes of a member conference’s office. A conference with a female commissioner may designate a different female involved with the management of the conference as a representative to the NCAA governance structure.

Divisions II and III do not have this designation, but many conferences in these divisions choose to name a senior woman administrator.

While the reference to appointing someone other than the director of athletics as senior woman administrator was not included in the definition before mid 2005-06 for Division I, 2003-04 for Division II and 2002-03 for in Division III, there were women serving in this capacity before the original definition entered the manual in 1989-90 and throughout the years until the definition was so amended.

The current NCAA governance structure includes only six committee seats specifically designated for an SWA:

- **Division I:** 1 (One seat on the Committee on Academics, Constitution 4.4.1)
- **Division II:** 4 (Four seats on the Management Council, Constitution 4.7.1)
- **Division III:** 1 (One seat on the Membership Committee, Bylaw 21.9.5.8.1)
- **Association-wide:** 0

A greater number of seats require either an SWA or an athletics director, but this still represents only a small portion of all committee seats.

In Division I, the Board of Directors requires one member of the Board to be a “senior woman athletics representative,” but does not specifically require an SWA. This person is to be “an institutional Division I member of Women Leaders in College Sports, appointed by the Executive Committee of Women Leaders in College Sports.” (Constitution 4.2.1)

SWAs are eligible to serve on the Division I Council, but there is not an SWA minimum (Constitution 4.3.1). Division I conferences, however, are required to include a campus SWA in the slate of candidates for Council vacancies per the following policy:

*Each Division I multisport conference shall submit three, four or five nominees to the Board of Directors for Council appointment consideration. Each conference must submit a selection of nominees that includes at least one campus senior woman administrator, one faculty athletics representative and one ethnic minority. The Board shall review the nominations to assess competency and ensure reasonably diverse perspectives are represented on the Council. In the absence of conference nominees that meet the specified diversity requirements, the Board of Directors may request a conference to submit additional nominees for Council appointment consideration.*

There is a minimum of one SWA to serve on the Committee on Academics (Constitution 4.4.1) and a minimum of one SWA or AD to serve on the Interpretations Committee (Bylaw 21.7.6.5.1). Division I has overall gender and diversity requirements for its governance structure:

## 4.02.5 Gender and Diversity Requirements.

The Board of Directors membership shall include at least one person who is an ethnic minority and at least one person of each gender, and a single member shall not be considered to meet both minimums. The combined membership of the Council, Committee on Academics and other Division I governance entities (other than sport committees) shall include representatives who comprise at least 20 percent of persons who are ethnic minorities and at least 35 percent of persons of each gender.

In Division II, there are no overall gender and diversity requirements for general committees, and the only additional SWA-related requirement is that the slate of nominees for Management Council openings must include an SWA (and AD and FAR) (Constitution 4.7.3.1).

In Division III, the Management Council requires at least nine directors of athletics or senior woman administrators, and at least eight women (Constitution 4.8.1). The Presidents Council requires four women, and all general committees require a minimum number of women, per this example:

## 21.9.5.3.1 Composition.

The committee [on Student-Athlete Reinstatement] shall be composed of six members, including one member from the Management Council and one student-athlete who shall be a member of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee. The committee shall include at least two men, and at least two women, and at least one of the positions shall be allocated for a member of an ethnic minority.

Regarding Association-wide committees, the Board of Governors includes presidents from each division with no gender requirements. The Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports requires two athletics directors or senior woman athletics administrators, one man and one woman (Bylaw 21.2.2). The Honors Committee, Minority Opportunities and Interests Committee, Research Committee, Walter Byers Scholarship Committee and Committee on Women’s Athletics allocate a minimum number of seats for women (Bylaws 21.2.3.1, 21.2.4.1, 21.2.7.1, 21.2.9.1, 21.2.10.1). The SWA is one of the designations included in the requirement that each rules and championship committee and select sports committees be composed of at least 25 percent of specified administrative positions (Bylaws 21.3.1.2, 21.4.1.2).



The SWA designation is not required for applicants to be selected for all other seats. Assistant ADs, Associate ADs and others (compliance directors, head athletic trainers, etc.) can fill committee seats without the SWA designation. The nominating body in each division considers the individual applicant's suitability for the committee assignment, and may or may not give any favor to the SWA designation in the selection process.

Finally, while a separate issue than the role and experiences of women in leadership, the history of women's sports in the NCAA further informs this study by providing perspective about the environment in which the SWA designation was created. While women have been competing in intercollegiate athletics for more than 100 years, women have been in the formal NCAA system for only 35 years. The following historical summary was derived from Joe Crowley's 2006 book on the first 100 years of the NCAA, "In The Arena," Richard Bell's 2008 article "A History of Women in Sport Prior to Title IX," and Amy S. Wilson's 2017 report written for the NCAA, "45 Years of Title IX: The Status of Women in Intercollegiate Athletics."

- There is not a clear historical record of early college sports for women because the competition was primarily intramural, including club matches, sorority matches and play days. There is a record of intercollegiate competition occurring in the late 1800s, with the frequency increasing in the early 1900s.
- Throughout the 1950s, '60s and '70s, the intercollegiate athletics landscape for women evolved considerably as the official position statement of the Division for Girls and Women in Sport, which was part of the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, was amended first to state that intercollegiate programs "may" exist, and then a few years later to state that it was "desirable" that they exist. This led to the eventual establishment of the Commission on Intercollegiate Sports for Women (CISW) in 1966, which was renamed the Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (CIAW) in 1967, and then was replaced by the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) in 1971.

- At the request of women's sports leaders, the NCAA Executive Committee prohibited female student-athletes from competing in NCAA championships in 1964.
- In 1967, the NCAA created a committee to examine the feasibility of supervising women's sports.
- Exploration of the NCAA offering women's sports heightened after the 1972 passage of Title IX. Women's sports were administered by the AIAW at this time, with that organization serving nearly 1,000 members and 125,000 college women. The AIAW resisted the control of women's sports by the NCAA because of a strong preference for the athletics model that existed within the AIAW and because of the NCAA's resistance to offering the opportunities afforded to women by Title IX.
- After failed proposals in 1978 and 1979, a proposal was adopted in January 1980 to add Divisions II and III championships in five women's sports.
- A plan for significant structural change to accommodate participation by female professionals in the NCAA governance process was forwarded to the membership in fall 1980. This was adopted in January 1981 (passing easily), at which time Division I women's championships were adopted (controversial, passing on reconsideration after an initial tie).
- The NCAA's move to offer women's championships ultimately caused the AIAW to disband in 1982.



# Highlights of Academic Research

This SWA study began with a literature review examining articles and past research on the SWA experience and perceptions of the SWA designation. The purpose of the review was to identify questions and themes to address in the current examination of the designation. It should be noted that the research referenced here was conducted with various numbers of SWAs at various times, and the findings serve to inform the narrative about the SWA experience.

The following is a summary of findings from various academic studies on the SWA position:

## Women in Leadership Positions

- Several factors contribute to the low number of women in athletics leadership positions. Gender stereotyping in leadership, gender bias in evaluation and mentoring networks, homologous reproduction, backlash and women’s resistance, male hegemony and hegemonic masculinity, sexism, racism and homophobic exclusion, gender schemas, and socially constructed stereotype about leadership all shed light on the low number of women in leadership (Hoffman, 2010).
- Title IX made former strategies for female advancement in higher education (subordination, separatism and innovation) ineffective and reduced the strategies for advancement available to women leaders to one: super-performance. This reliance on a single strategy, characterized by tokenism and isolation, does not give a critical mass of women access to leadership roles (Hoffman, 2010).
- The increased funding and opportunities that resulted from Title IX legitimized employment in women’s athletics for men. The integration of women’s sports into the prevailing, high-stakes commercial model of college athletics squeezed out women leaders, with their athlete-centered, educational approach (Buzuvis, 2015).
- The SWA designation has pinched the pipeline to a single woman, often confined to gender equity or compliance. Being the only woman on the senior management team presents constant conflict for SWAs (Hoffman, 2010).

## Reasons to Enter/Stay in the Field

- The reasons female administrators entered the field were their involvement as a student-athlete, their active pursuit of a position in intercollegiate athletics, an internship as a student, or an academic major that involved athletics. The least-cited reasons were encouragement by family members and encouragement by male mentors to enter the field. Women accept jobs because of the challenge of the assignment more than any other factor (NCAA Barriers Study, 2008-09).
- There are high levels of job satisfaction by female administrators. Lower satisfaction levels were shown for level of stress, equality of sexes in the athletics department, equality of race/ethnicity in the athletics department and the opportunity for career advancement (NCAA Barriers Study, 2008-09).

## Men Hire Men

- Departments headed by men have fewer women head coaches than departments headed by women (Acosta and Carpenter, 2014).
- A male applicant may seem less encumbered by family responsibilities, and thus more likely to be devoted to the job (Dixon and Bruening, 2005).
- Heterosexism and anti-lesbian bias suppress the hiring of women as well, due to the perception that lesbians do not comply with expected social roles for women and are thus destabilizing to male-dominated culture (Buzuvis, 2015).

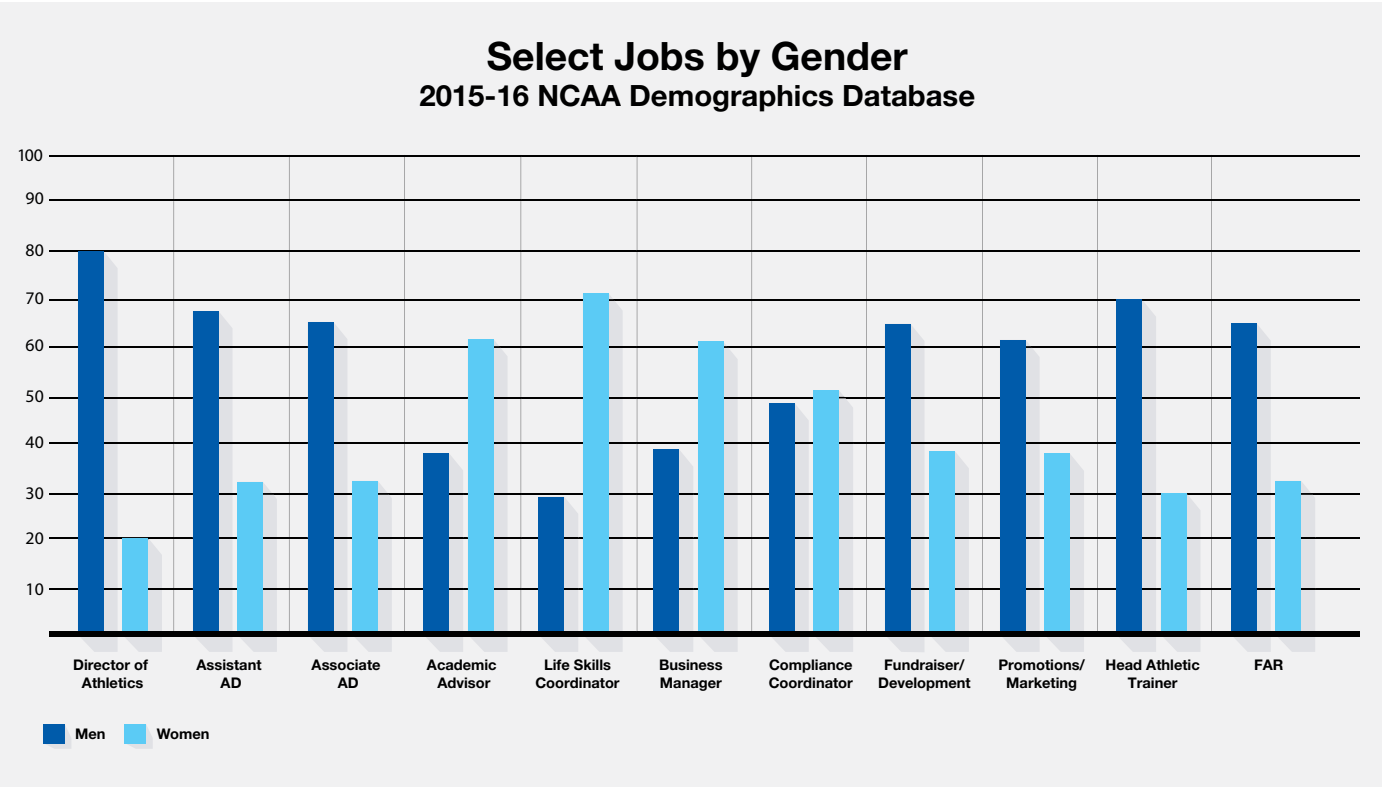
## Impact of Geography

- The percentage of female ADs is highest in the Northeast (29.9 percent) and lowest in the South (16.9 percent) (Acosta and Carpenter, 2014).
- The percentage of administrations with no females is highest in the South (13.8 percent) and lowest in the West (7.7 percent) (Acosta and Carpenter, 2014).

## SWA as Decision-Maker

- ADs and SWAs have different perceptions of the extent to which SWAs performed roles related to core management team participation. The SWA did not typically perceive she was empowered to make decisions in the department as much as the ADs perceived she assumed the role of decision-maker. A clear disparity existed in role definition between the two groups (Tiell and Dixon, 2008).





- Women are more likely to be saddled with the responsibilities that are not as valued within the department (Buzuvis, 2015). Women work mainly in service roles and paperwork jobs (Hoffman, 2010).
- Women leaders are hard pressed to avoid caretaking units such as academic support and compliance within the athletics department even though responsibility in these areas can advance women leaders into the senior team through the SWA role. However, once designated with that role, the caretaking units can direct women on a career path as far as a senior associate AD and not to the AD role (Hoffman, 2010).
- SWAs were more likely to engage in internal, communal-type roles involving student-athlete welfare while their male counterparts were more likely to engage in external, agentic-type roles such as marketing and development (Tiell and Dixon, 2008).
- The SWA role emerged at the same time as the compliance unit. This coincidence further tracked women into roles with organizational and advisory functions, rather than decision-making authority (Hoffman, 2010).
- Women also are tracked into overseeing women’s programs rather than external roles, such as marketing men’s sports that generate revenue (Hoffman, 2010).
- SWAs in all divisions wanted more decision-making authority in financial areas such as operations, budgeting, capital outlay, salary consideration, media broadcast contracts and sponsorship advertising (Grappendorf, 2007).
- In order for the SWA to have authority that is more than advisory in nature, she must have final, decision-making authority in the area of budgetary decisions. This finding is consistent with Claussen and Lehr (2002), who determined that “SWAs possess only advisory authority for most functions analyzed” (Hatfield LM, Hatfield LC, Drummond, 2009).

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