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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

I have no actual or potential conflict of interest in relation to this presentation.

Organizational Structure in High-Performance

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Ben Gleason, PhD, CSCS,*D, RSCC
Organizational Structure in High Performance



Objectives

- Identify best practices and common shortfalls in sport organization structure & management
- Discuss integrated support team & management roles
- Identify accountability resources, such as evaluation tools available for S&C coaches
- Discuss available resources supporting knowledge-related tasks within the organization and beyond

Major Themes

- Proper organizational structure enables effectiveness
- Good leadership tends to lead to competitive advantage
- A *process focus* leads to more predictable outcomes than *outcome focus*
- Leadership is an active process

Definitions*

- Direct report employee: Skilled service provider, worker level
 - S&C, sport scientist, ATC, sport physician, sport position coach
 - Does not include developmental roles (interns, GAs, etc.)**
- Manager: supervisory employee responsible for similar-skill or differing-skill organizational functions
 - Head S&C coach, Coordinator (football)
 - [Typically considered middle management]
- Director: supervisory or executive employee responsible for multiple manager roles, organizational effectiveness

*Specific to sport industry

**Developmental roles require more attention, deliberate training

Definitions (continued)

- Span of control: number of direct-report employees under a manager's purview
- Process: linear or semi-linear sequence involving ingredients or actions that lead to an outcome
- Outcome: result

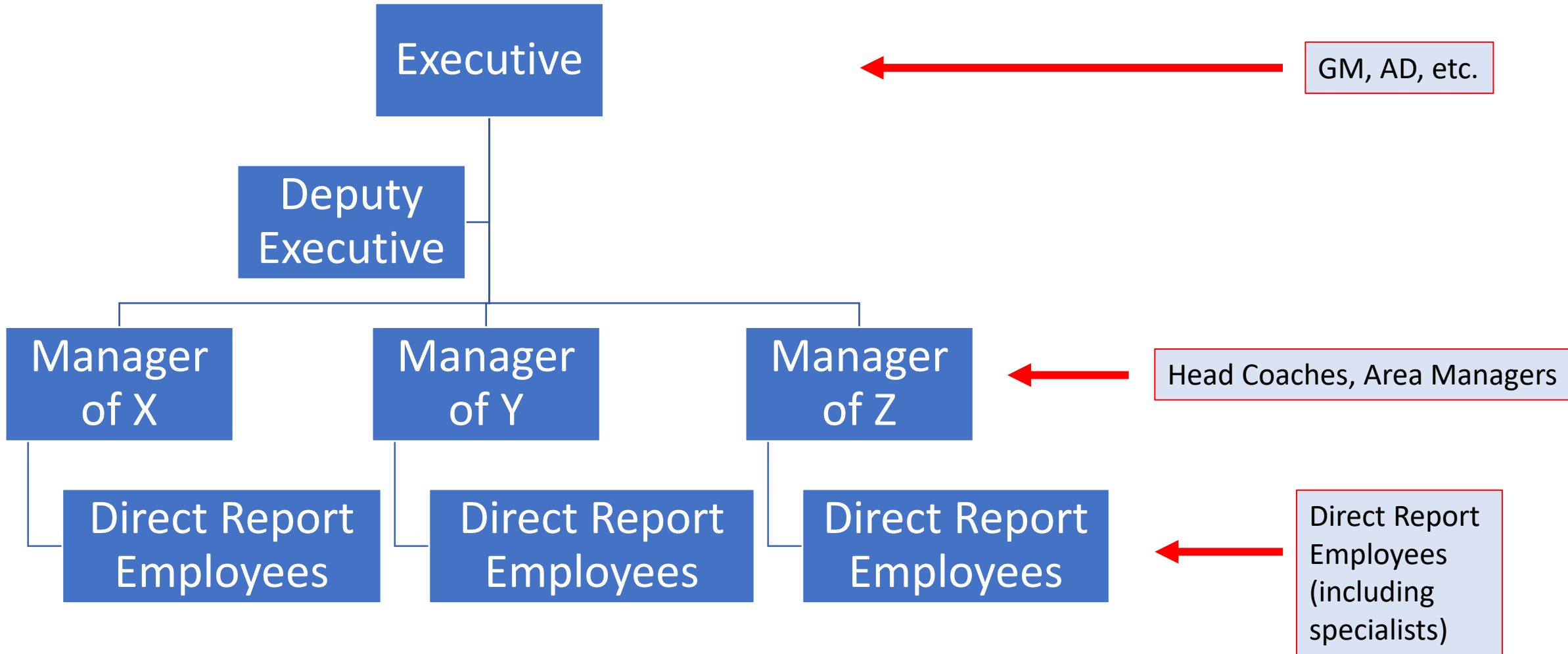
Part 1: Sport Organizational Structure, Past & Present



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Conceptual Organizational Structure



Organizational Structure & Management Practice Examples



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Present (old) NCAA management model

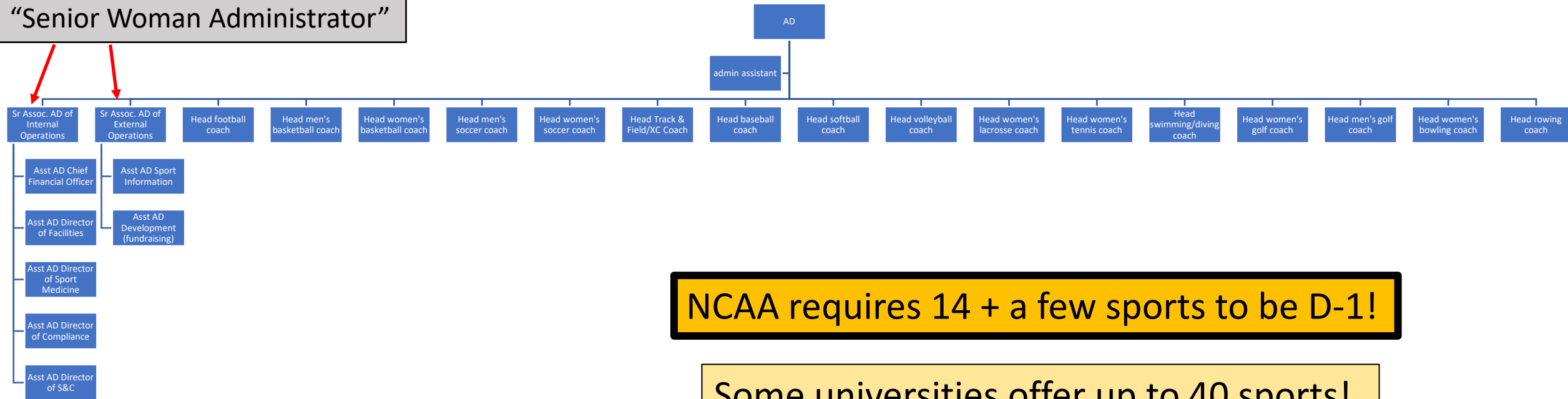
- Athletic Director
- Subordinate ADs (Associate, Assistant)
- Subordinate Subordinates (Director of...)
- Specialists & other workers
- (“Student”-athletes or student athletes)

- Features “sport supervisor” model

← Head sport coaches are aligned here at most institutions

Collegiate Athletic Department Model

Often one of these is also a "Senior Woman Administrator"



NCAA requires 14 + a few sports to be D-1!

Some universities offer up to 40 sports!
(18 pictured above)

Critical questions...

- How many people can one person supervise effectively?
 - ...for simplicity, let's consider a restaurant.
- How often should evaluation & feedback occur?
 - ...actual management
- Ultimately, collegiate sport has too many sports to be supervised with typical infrastructure
- Collegiate S&C has been a victim of this!

Span of Control

- Management research indicates range of manager:direct report employee ratios is about ... 1:4 to 1:16-ish (Davison, 2003)
 - Depends on complexity of organization & demands
- **What is ideal?** ...A few considerations:
 1. Size of business
 2. Critical nature of business
 - Coordination/communication requirements & required timeline of information sharing
 - Success-failure influence of actions/inactions
 - Long-term vs. short-term

Span of Control (cont'd)

- Depends upon (cont'd):
 3. Diversity/variation of tasks performed by direct report employees
 - Brain surgeons vs. line cooks
 - S&C coaches vs. sport scientists vs. ATCs vs. sport dietitians, etc.
 4. Leadership & management skills at top of organization
 5. Staff quality & experience
 6. Resistance to change
 7. Willingness to participate/drive innovation

(Davison, 2003)

Span of Control (cont'd)

- Budget for management depends on:
 - Company's ability to pay
 - Management focus
 - Industry
 - Organization size
- Wider span of control is ***cheaper***, but...effectiveness lags

Davison (2003)

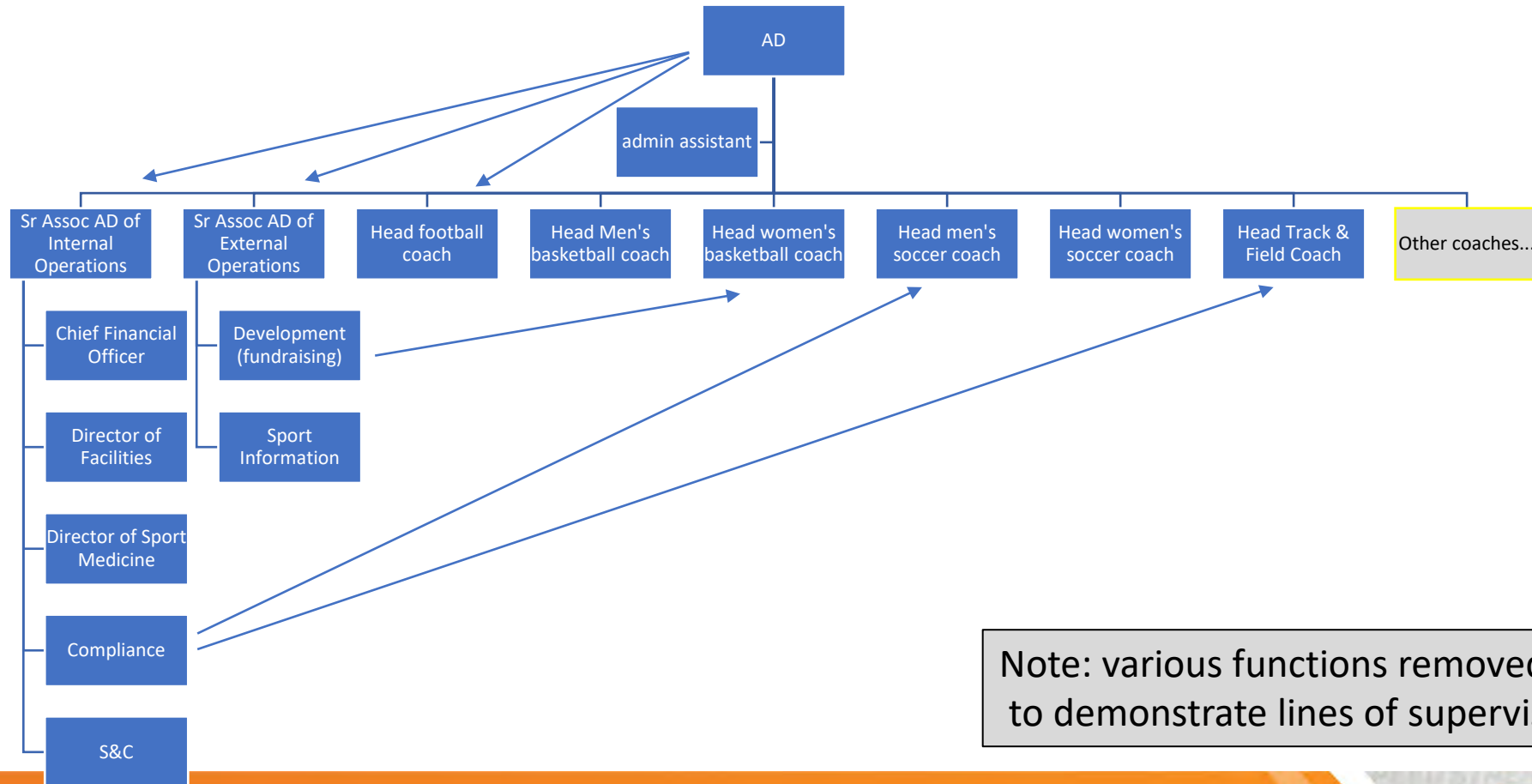
Who's aware?

Bob Alejo's 2021 social media survey suggests the vast majority of senior college S&C coaches ($n = 112$) are **NOT supervised**.



Common Management Strategy

- Enter the “sport supervisor” model...



Note: various functions removed to demonstrate lines of supervision

Common ... Management ...? Strategy

- Major issues
 - What does a Assoc./Asst. AD/Director of _____ know about coaching? Best practices?
 - Compliance Directors are *really* busy. Can they visit the coach/team & maintain general awareness of goings-on?
- Ineffective management, leads to:
 - Poor administrative awareness of working conditions, employee needs
 - Poor culture—low pay, long hours, dismissive about solutions
 - Unawareness of employee effectiveness!
 - ...willful ignorance!

Bad Management?

- Ken Blanchard: “Leave-alone-zap! Manager” only notices employee when they make a mistake
- Also refers to this as a “seagull management” ...where seagull managers “fly in, make a lot of noise, dump on everyone, then fly off somewhere.”

Shula & Blanchard (1995, p. 125-126)

Also: Toilet bowl management: flush the staff & start over



Reality

If leadership is unaware of goings-on within your organization, limiting staff and resources, *hoping* to perform well...

...You are NOT a high-performance organization.

Welcome to JV. High staff turnover, volatility.

Truth: There's *nothing wrong* with participation-level sport. Be honest about what your organization is about. Do not mislead athletes & fan base, or coaches; establish your position accordingly.

Part 2: Considerations for establishing a **HIGH-PERFORMANCE Environment**

Key Skills & Process in *High Performance Sport & Performance*

- International precedent (decades-long) of:
 - Integrated expertise
 - Specialists with advanced degrees* + experience in sport
 - Group decision-making
 - Checks & balances
 - Insight from multiple areas of specialty
 - Provides better understanding of systems & interaction (keeps information in context)
 - Reduced silo-ing
 - (Redundancy?)

*advanced degree = postgraduate (master's or doctorate); some...typically awarded by/through **RESEARCH**

Can a High-Performance Environment be Sustainable?

- **Sustainable excellence in process can be guided & made possible by:**
 - Right-sized management implementing contemporary leadership principles
 - Hiring capable, right-skilled managerial employees (and/or developing them)
 - Sufficient **management awareness** & resources to enable problem-solving
 - Evaluation of all employees
 - Empowerment of all employees (especially worker-level)
 - Honesty

New Developments

- High Performance Manager (Director) Role
- Sport Science Roles
- Interdisciplinary alignment
 - High Performance Model
 - Key feature: Specialist support employees collaboratively support coaches & athletes
 - No more autocratic sport coaches (?)

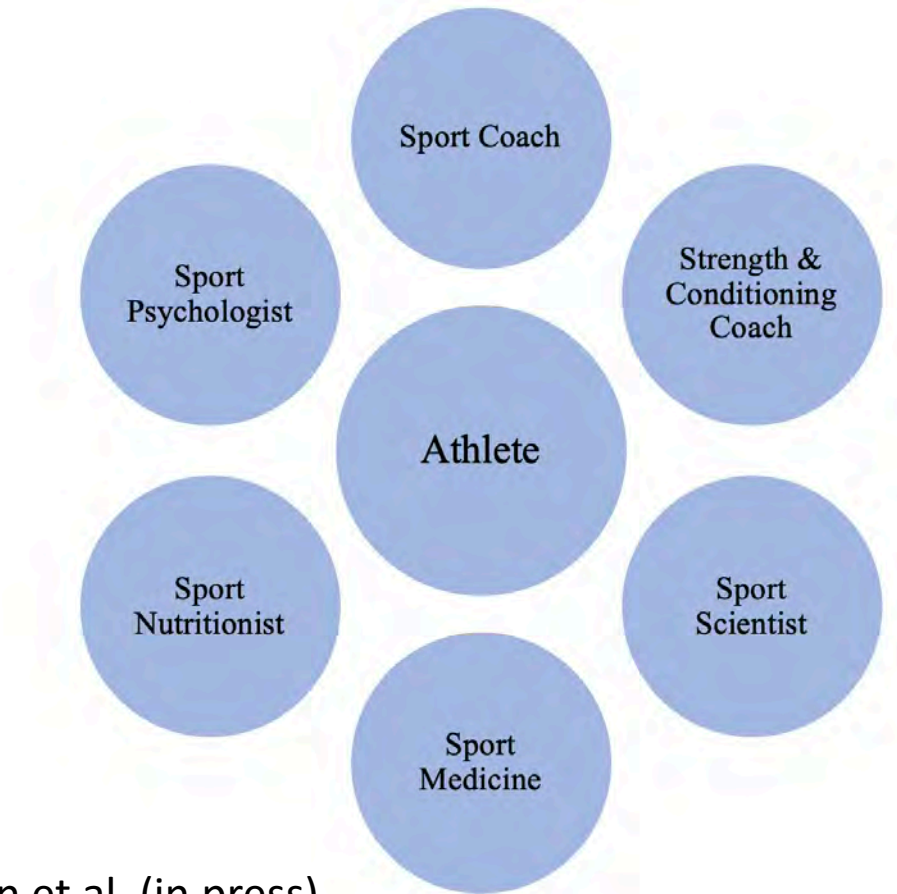
From Google Dictionary...

Autocratic: (*adjective*) relating to a ruler who has absolute power.

Taking no account of other people's wishes or opinions; domineering.

Key Concept

- Integrated/Interdisciplinary Support Team (IST)
 - Athlete-centered training & care
 - Began in nationally-funded sport overseas
 - Spread into U.S. pro sport
 - Some partial application at U.S. collegiate level



Gleason et al. (in press)

Major IST Specialties

- Sport Physiology (Gleason, in press)
- Sport Biomechanics (Elliott, 1999; Elliott, 2006; Gleason, in press)
- Skill Acquisition, Expertise, Decision-Making (Gleason, in press)
- Sport Psychology (Vealey et al., 2019)
- Sport Dietetics (Nutrition) (Potter & Boyd, 2017; Gleason, in press)
- Sport Medicine

New Developments

- Designed to:
 - Meet demands
 - Reduce dysfunction



Goals for a high-performing organization

- Make the right decision...efficiently *AND* ethically
- Optimize processes
- Ensure employees are skilled, supervised, evaluated, and motivated
- Establish an **acceptable Standard of Care** for athletes
 - **Critical** for U.S. collegiate setting
 - Influences retention & recruiting
 - Fosters institutional control of training processes
 - Essential for professional sport teams

Food for thought...
Is athlete retention the
next frontier in the NIL era?

Goals for a high-performing organization (cont'd)

- Critical to culture:
 - Effectively supervise staff & athletes
 - Effectively evaluate staff & athletes
 - Effectively train and mentor staff & athletes
 - Empower staff to problem-solve & get out of their way!
 - Involve athletes in solutions as they are capable
 - Often mentoring/grooming leadership, not deputizing, per se...

Good Management?

- Includes evaluation!
- Gleason et al. (2020) proposed:
 - Self evaluation
 - Supervisor evaluation
 - Peer evaluation

Practitioner-Driven Recommendations for the Professional Evaluation of the Strength and Conditioning Coach

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to provide a practical framework for athletic administrators and senior coaches to use in evaluating a strength and conditioning coach (SCC) under their supervision. A formal objective evaluation process may improve training outcomes, prevent common troublesome issues in the field, increase accountability, and optimize organizational dynamics. Recommendations include planned, systematic, and documented observation of work performed, review of performance testing data, and developmental feedback meetings between the SCC and the supervisor. Some modification may be necessary for each sector of the field. However, the general themes may still be followed by supervisors.

INTRODUCTION

The strength and conditioning coach (SCC) is a relatively young professional role, in which employees are primarily charged to implement training methods intended to

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enhance the physical development of athletic populations (22). In the most recent National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) Professional Standards and Guidelines, the NSCA suggested that the job encompasses a mix of 5 areas: exercise science, administration, management, teaching, and coaching (32). Specific duties may vary between senior and junior coaches (6); therefore, the reader is referred to the NSCA Essentials of Strength Training and Conditioning for discussion of job tasks and standards of field-specific staff qualifications (43) (p.644–656). Ongoing discussion among strength and conditioning (S&C) professionals (1,15,47,48) highlights a need for SCC evaluation tools as part of a necessary step in promoting professionalism and enhancing opportunities within the career field. However, at this time, sufficient evaluation tools have not yet been designed, shared, and implemented within this professional population. For instance, only 1 form intended for evaluation of student (novice) coaches is included in the NSCA Essentials of Strength Training and Conditioning (43) (p.645). In recent years, a variety of evaluation tools have been developed by researchers and practitioners from the coach education field

that may be used to evaluate sport coaches (13,33). These concepts may also be applied effectively within the strength and conditioning context.

As suggested by Gilbert and Baldis (14), a careful analysis of desired outcomes and needs of the clientele must be performed before coaching effectiveness may be evaluated. In addition, the interpersonal (coach-athlete) behaviors and work processes may be observed to provide evidence of the applied professional knowledge and self-awareness of the coach. Several evaluations of skilled coaches and related S&C job duties are available in the literature (6,9,21,27–30,38) and thus are not discussed completely in this article. After review of this body of literature, an informed supervisor may identify specific behaviors that are desired of the SCC, formalize the role they wish the SCC to fulfill, and work with the SCC to establish goals according to appropriate and achievable performance outcomes using reasonable evaluation factors.

KEY WORDS:
coach evaluation; coach supervision

Part 3: Modern High-Performance Organizational Structures



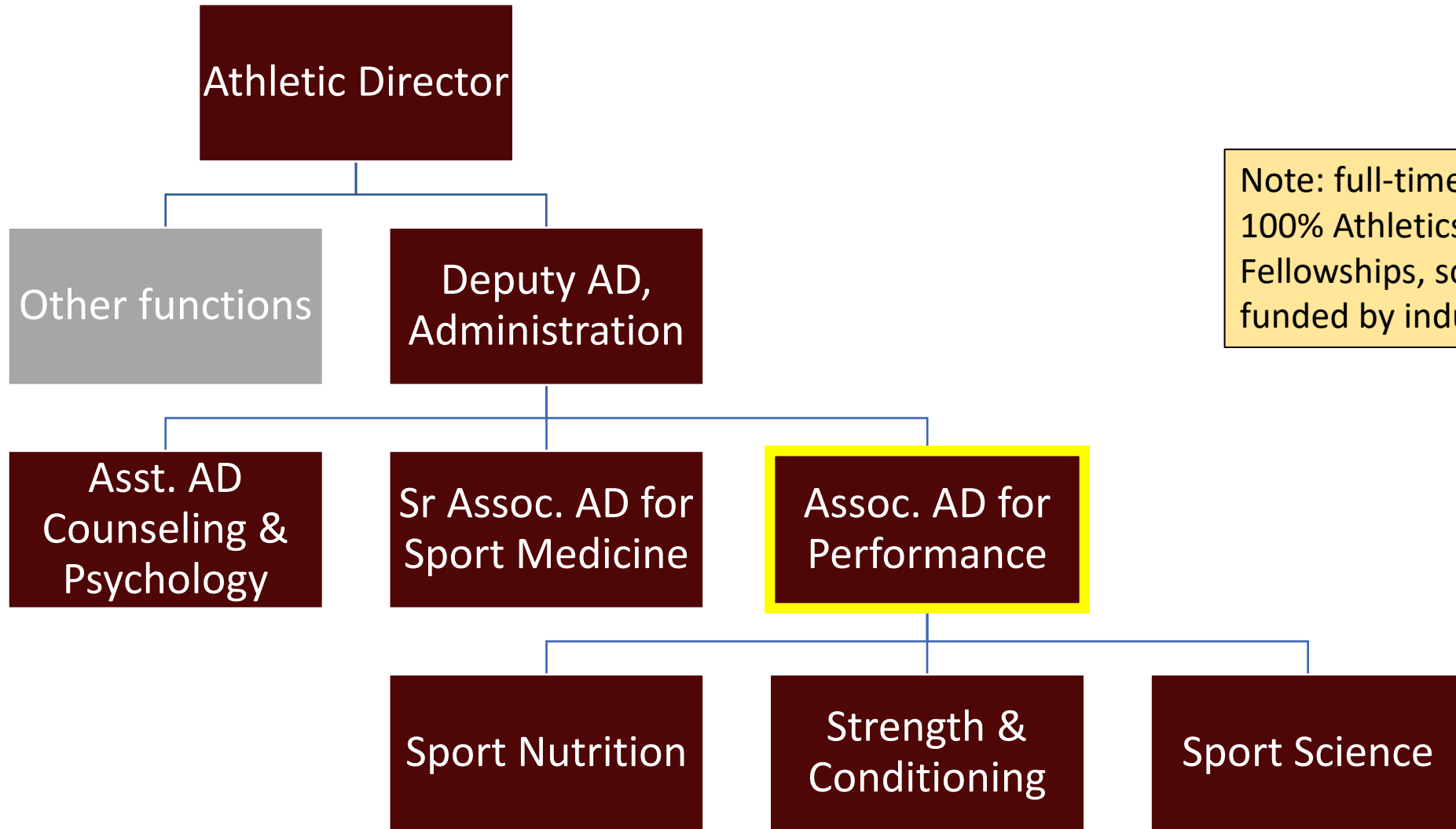
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Collegiate HP Model Adaptation Example

- Texas A&M Associate Director of Performance, Howard Gray
 - Oversees:
 1. Performance Nutrition
 2. Sports Performance
 3. Sport Science
 - Additional duty: collaborate with Huffines Institute, Department of Kinesiology, Engineering, & other partners
 - Began with football Asst. AD for Sport Science (2014)
 - Role morphed to department-wide (2018)

Texas A&M Structure



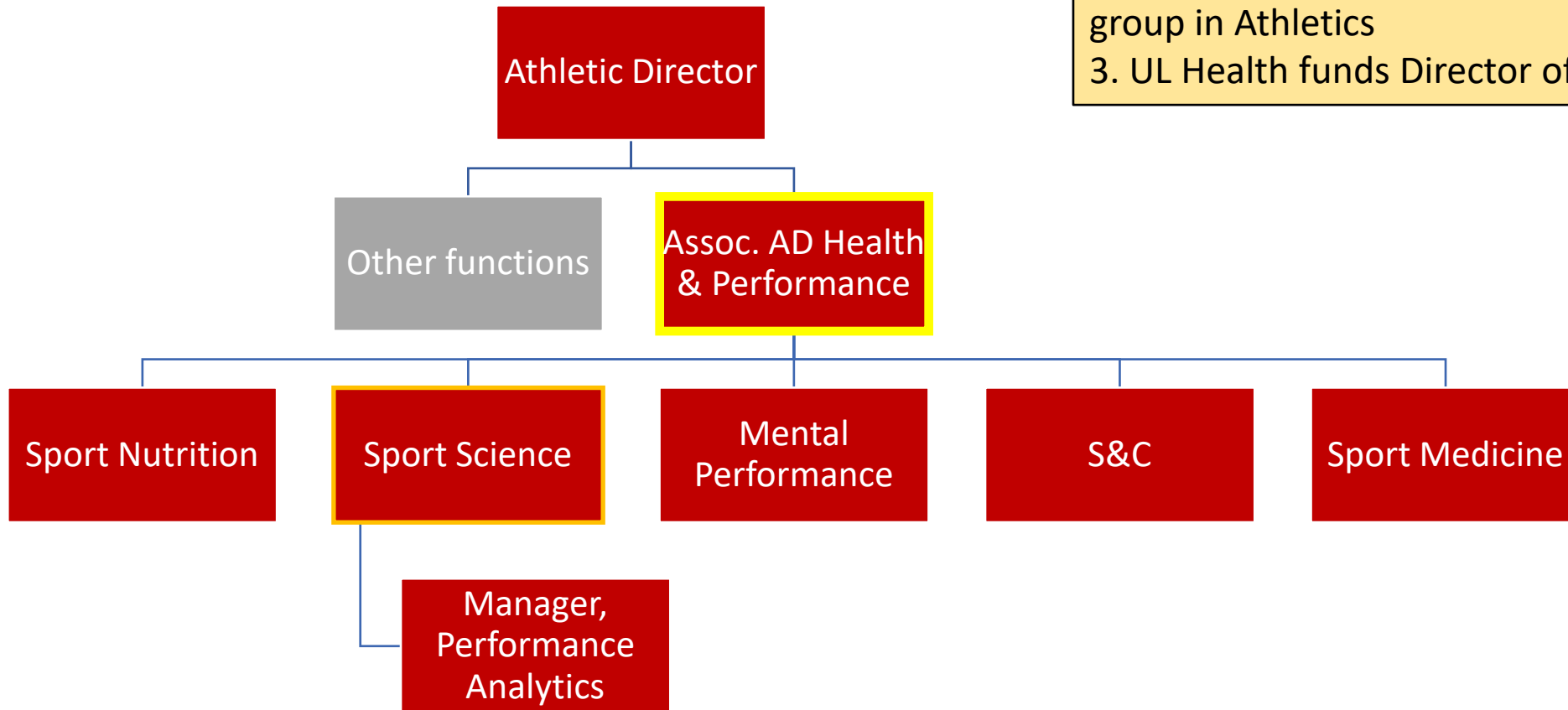
Note: full-time positions are 100% Athletics-funded
Fellowships, scholarships funded by industry partner

Collegiate HP Model Adaptation Example

- University of Louisville Associate AD/Health & Performance, Dr Pat Ivey
 - Oversees:
 - S&C
 - Sport Medicine
 - **Sport Science***
 - Mental Performance
 - Sport Nutrition

Louisville Structure

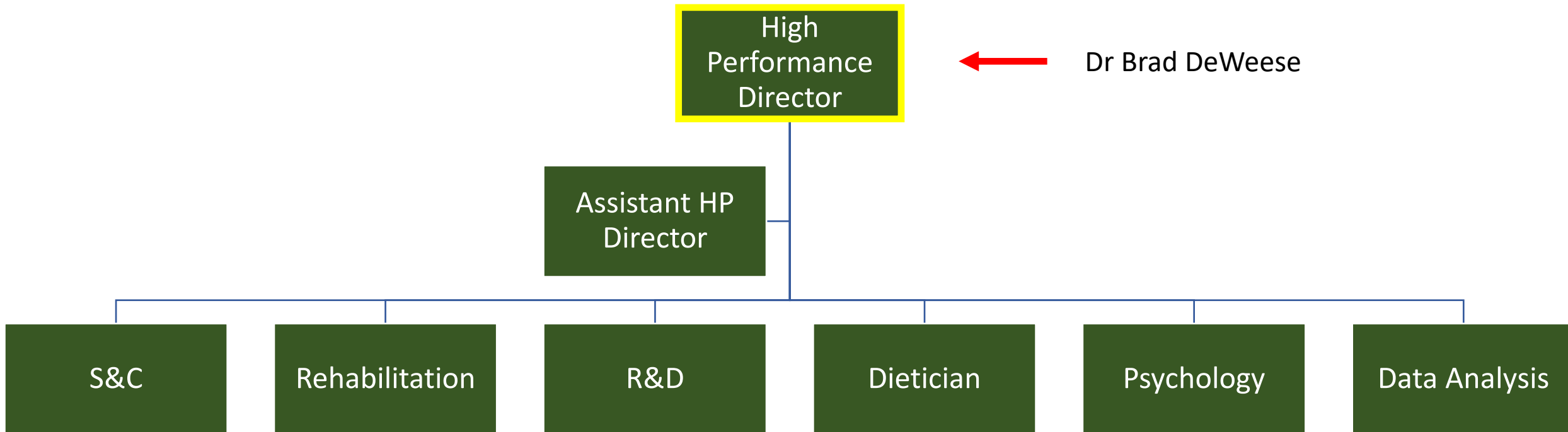
Notes:
1. Dr Ivey supervises more functions than any other supervisor in Athletics
2. Health & Performance are highest educated/certified group in Athletics
3. UL Health funds Director of Sport Science position



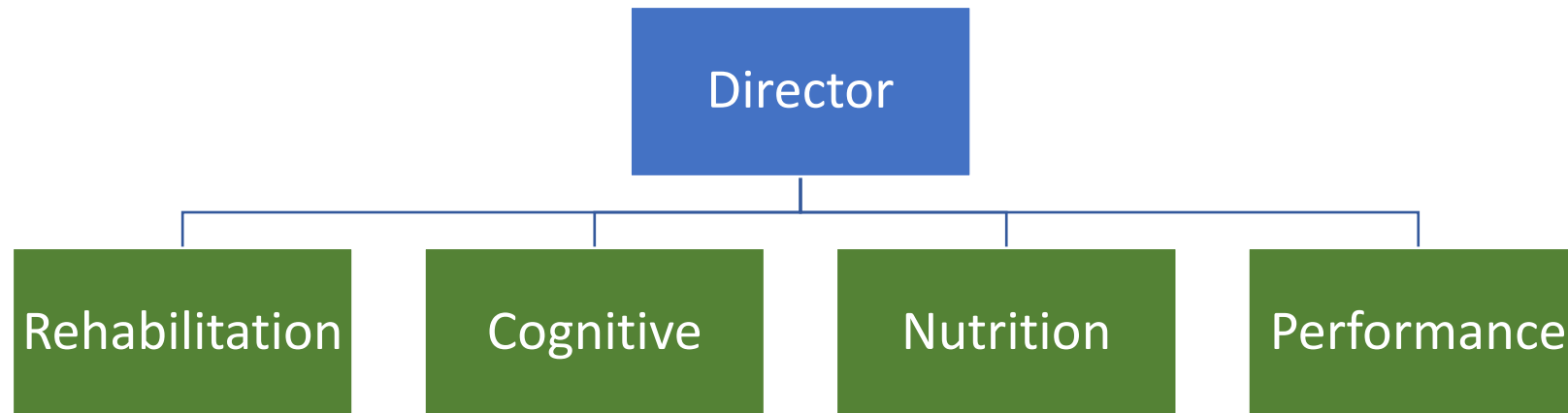
Louisville Alliance

- *Funding for Sport Science Role and beyond...
 - Obtained via collaborative partnership with UL Health
 - Visionary alliance between medical group & local sport organization(s)
 - Partly **philanthropic**, not necessarily matched to revenue
 - Deliverables:
 1. Demonstrate infiltration and influence in local area
 2. Produce research
 3. Develop new academic programs & faculty lines, increasing university enrollment

Pro Football HP Model Adaptation Example: New York Jets



Tactical Example: Holistic Health & Fitness (H2F)



US Army FM 7-22

The High Performance Manager

- Oversees all sport support functions (Smith & Smolianov, 2016)
- Works at strategic, operational, and individual level
 - Establishes vision, sets org structure & policies, plans, establishes working relationships among staff, provides feedback, facilitates learning, etc. (Molan et al., 2022)
- Knowledge & experience in *training process* is valuable!
 - Typically **S&C** or Sport Medicine backgrounds
 - Needs to understand complexities in detail
 - Will get in battles with poorly-developed coaches
 - Great position for sport scientist or senior S&C coach (Smith & Smolianov, 2016)

The High Performance Manager

- Tenney (2022) identified 4 major competencies:
 - Performance facilitator
 - Relationship builder
 - Strategic thinker
 - **Quality control manager**
- Bob Alejo: “Key reason why I’m effective is I’m out of the office watching everything in person.”
 - Critical: **Cannot be a service provider**

Exercise and Sports Sciences Australia Guidance for Accredited HP Manager

1. Apply leadership skills to multidisciplinary team of sport science/sport medicine professionals
2. Knowledge of safety & well-being legislation for HP environments, ability to understand & comply with sport-specific policies
3. Knowledge of & capacity to uphold ethical practice (anti-doping, etc.)
4. Understand, select, design, modify appropriate assessment protocols
5. Capacity to evaluate effectiveness of HP programs (KPIs)
6. Able to develop policies, procedures, & strategic plans
7. Cultural competence; communicate effectively with range of stakeholders
8. Communicate effectively with health & medical professionals, document decisions, maintain confidential records
9. Manage relationships with key partners (NSOs, owners, sponsors, etc.)
10. Oversee & support recruitment, development, & retention of staff
11. Apply managerial skills—establish budgets, financial control & forecasting resource and staff allocation within established parameters

Exercise & Sports Sciences Australia, 2019

Additional Best Practices to Consider

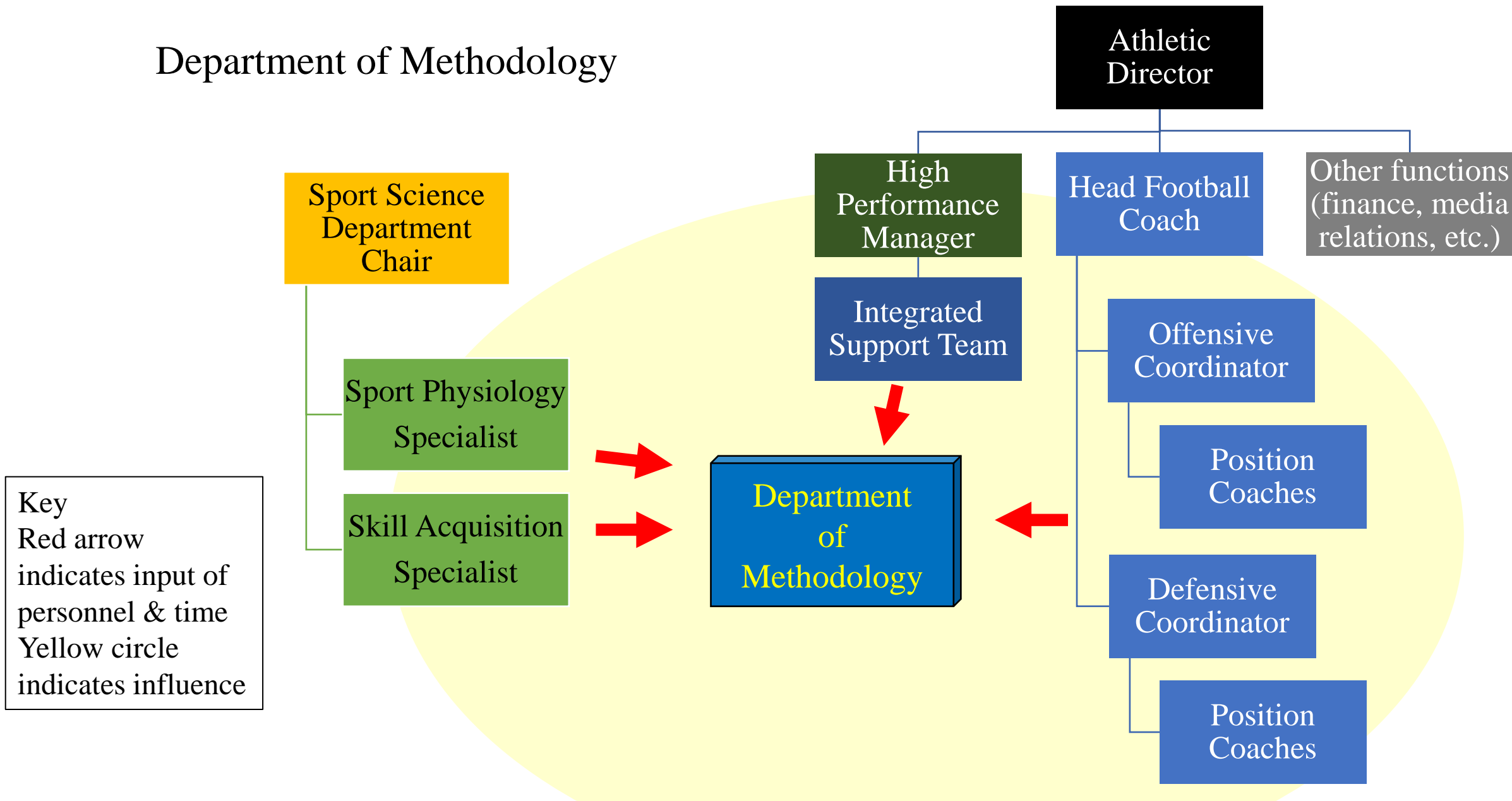
- Embedded Research & Development (R&D) Department
 - Seen in multiple pro sport teams
 - Learning more about sport!
 - Servicing team & problem-solving!

See Brocherie & Beard, 2021

Seeking Integration...?

- Department of Methodology (Rothwell et al., 2020)
 - Official language, process conceptualization

Department of Methodology



Key
Red arrow
indicates input of
personnel & time
Yellow circle
indicates influence

Additional Issues to Discuss



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Collegiate Sport Science Application

- Hornsby et al. (2021) identified 3 distinct models in the collegiate sector
 1. Athletic department partners with academics
 2. Athletic dept. hires sport scientist(s)
 3. Athletic dept. buys tech and has performance or medical staff run tech as “sport science”



Most common, least effective

What is a Sport Scientist?

- Gleason et al. (in press)
- Helps observe & manage training process & enhance coach-athlete relationship
- Hire a qualified one (usually specialized training (PhD) & experience) if you want to know...
 - Common specialty areas: sport physiology, performance psychology, skill acquisition & expertise, biomechanics, kinanthropometry (subdiscipline) (Gleason et al., in press)

How Do We Develop a Sport Scientist?

- Gleason et al. (in press)
- Advanced specialty education (probably PhD, maybe masters by research)
- Mentored development by qualified personnel
- Certification/accreditation/licensure
 - Governing organization oversight of quality

Acknowledgements

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Thank you! Questions?

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