This creative project resulted in a student-athlete social media policy and crisis communications plan for Ball State University’s athletics department. This particular research focused on the crisis management practice developed by W. Timothy Coombs (1999, 2007, 2014). Coombs argues crisis management occurs in three stages and describes crisis management should be accomplished through internal and external communication. This formed the theoretical foundation of the creative project. The researcher sought to discover the most common elements of a purposive sample of Division I universities and how they employ their student-athlete social media policies by determining the most common steps to monitor student-athlete social media activity. This was achieved through a content analysis of social media policies from Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) Mid-American Conference (MAC) universities. These universities are a convenience sample and were chosen because Ball State University is in the MAC and is a FBS university. This analysis was evaluated and combined with the researcher’s previous qualitative research that examined Ball State University’s athletics department and its role in monitoring student-athlete social media. From these two
studies, two theory-based materials were developed. First, a social media policy was developed specifically for Ball State University. Secondly, a crisis communication plan was constructed based on Coombs’ theoretical crisis management foundation in order to help in future crises that might occur in the Ball State Athletics Department as a result of student-athlete social media behavior.