

Teaching facility and program development through an authentic interdisciplinary student project

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**Teaching
Session 10**

**Friday, May 30, 2008
8:00 AM - 8:25 AM**

**Presentation (25-minute)
Abstract 182**

Being concerned with the domination of hypercommercial enterprises and the lack of public consideration within the sport industry, Amis & Silk (2005) indicated the need to more closely connect our classrooms with the challenges faced on the streets and to intervene in local communities in order to promote social improvement. Therefore, the key objective of this project is that students will be able to demonstrate their ability to develop systematic sport management solutions to social problems. The concept of interdisciplinary teaching is an educational model that can accomplish this objective. As Chen et. al. (2005) indicated, the interdisciplinary collaboration between faculty can provide positive outcomes for all involved. According to Dyer (2003), in an interdisciplinary approach faculty members share the lead responsibilities; collaboratively assess student learning needs that guide course implementation through review of assignments, open class review sessions, and in-class student participation; plan collaboratively and share the responsibility for course and student outcomes. The purpose of this presentation is to share our experience in developing such a project and discuss its implications to motivating students as learners. The initiative began with three faculty members from the Sport, Fitness, and Leisure Studies Department at Salem State College and involved students designing and programming an outdoor fitness facility. The initiative was well received by the Recreation Department, and the Mayor of Salem (a city located on the North Shore of Boston, MA), in the spring of 2007.

Outdoor fitness grounds can be a useful alternative to the indoor gymnasiums. Increasing amounts of time spent indoors contribute to the development of allergies and asthma afflicting over 57 million Americans (Cheket-Hanks, 2003). Outdoor fitness facilities can help with the current obesity trends in our youths and adults. If we have many visible outdoor facilities supported by instructional programs, available at no cost, at any time, to anyone, effective and positive outcomes for physical education, school sport, and the community are expected (Lindsay, 2005). Our interdisciplinary student project is to build such a facility and provide schools, community groups, and individuals with strategies for organizing outdoor fitness competitions and exercise programs. The student's plan draws on their knowledge and experiences in four classes. Event and Facility Management (fall 2007) class will compete for best facility and event development plan. Legal Aspects (fall 2007) class will compete for the best risk management plan. Financial Aspects (fall 2007) class will compete for the best grant seeking proposal which will be submitted to a local bank's community foundation. Issues in Public and Community Health (spring 2008) class will compete for the best programming plan which will be used to optimize the use of the facility.

Student groups will compete by presenting the following elements of their proposal. Concept: An outdoor fitness ground with basic conditioning facilities including but not limited to bars for pull-ups, push-ups, dips, sit-ups, inverted rows and back extensions; servicing college and school athletes, all students and community members, particularly those who can not afford gym memberships and instruction; designed and built by Salem State College students partnering with faculty, athletic staff, the City of Salem Recreation Department and contractors; using disposed, donated and recycled materials, such as pipes and wood left from construction, as well as scrap metal and wood from junk yards; maintained by the City of Salem Recreation Department (if built in the suggested public parks); activity programs for schools and the local community developed by students; faculty to provide ongoing education of how to use the facility for regular exercises through activity courses, wellness seminars, and clinics. Rationale: provide a positive influence on community health, productivity, social harmony and quality of life through fresh air exercise available 24/7 for all; Salem State College athletic teams could improve their performance through outdoor conditioning, and serve as role models encouraging community members to exercise; Salem State College and the City of Salem will show leadership as environmentally aware providers of fitness and health for all; in line with its goals, Salem State College will contribute to projects designed to reduce income, wealth, and power disparities within the community.

The students will collaborate with their counterparts from different classes to exchange research and planning information. The students will also demonstrate their ability to seek assistance within the college and from external organizations. The culmination of the project will be authentic to provide direct examination of student performance on the given intellectual task (Wiggins, 1990). The students will enter their proposals and presentations in a competition to be judged by the Mayor of Salem, the City of Salem Recreation Department, Salem State College Athletic Department and faculty. The review committee will assess the student submissions based on quality and thoroughness of research, analytical and creative work, relevance of facts, use of theory, and the quality of presentation. The facilities are to be built and programs are to commence by the end of 2008. As of this writing, our project is in the initial stages. In the first month of the project student groups presented their draft ideas and debated options for the facility locations, types of programs, equipment needed; sources of material and labor. The initial stage

2008 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM 2008)

indicated that when charged with a project that is authentic, yet competitive, students' enthusiasm, involvement, creativity, responsibility, and cooperative efforts increase. Students drawing from their experiences in their course work, and charged with the ability to improve quality of life in their community makes them viable stakeholders and creates a more receptive learning environment. Our presentation will discuss the project implementation including benefits, challenges, lessons learned, and improvements. A concluding discussion will address the implications of using an authentic interdisciplinary instructional model to teach students how to develop systematic sport management solutions to social problems.

References:

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