

**Experiential learning: collaboration of a sport management program, athletic department, and a corporate sponsor**

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**Teaching  
Session 19**

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**Presentation (25-minute)  
Abstract 444**

As the sport industry continues to grow, sport management programs have focused on developing strategies to prepare students to enter and successfully navigate this rapidly evolving field (Southall, Nagel, LeGrande, & Han 2003). This is becoming more important as sport industry professionals continue to express dissatisfaction with sport management program curricula regarding the incompatibility of program curricula with the necessary entry level skills (Helyar, 2006).

Experiential learning has been utilized over the last decade within the discipline in an effort to provide students with the necessary experience and skill set to help students follow a path for a career in the sport industry (Parkhouse, 1996; Gladden, & McDonald, 1999; Scott, Seidler & Lough, 1999). By utilizing such a strategy, theory and practice can be merged by supplying students with knowledge, critical thinking skills, and expertise before sending sport management graduates into the industry (Cuneen & Parks, 1997).

Beyond the critical need of adequately preparing students for a career in the sport industry, faculty members are continually charged with conducting scholarship of engagement, a process that connects an institution of higher education's inquiry with the needs of the industry and the community (Kone, 2000; Ward, 2003). Such opportunities allow the faculty to collaborate, build relationships, and develop research contacts with sport industry professionals which can also result in new experiential learning opportunities for the students.

This session presents an overview of a successful experiential learning program which incorporated scholarship of engagement. The program was jointly established between sport management faculty members and a large - long standing athletic corporate partner at a Division I-A institution. The corporate partnership included the common elements of a sponsorship; however, it also incorporated an educational component which provided: student internships, financial program support, as well as a sponsorship activation course project for sport management students for three years. As part of the program, students were asked to activate and present to the sponsor a football/basketball (depending on the semester) sponsorship activation plan for the following season. The outcome was it fulfilled a critical need for student preparation as well as the sport organization. Students gained innumerable experience in sponsorship activation, and also created scholarly research projects for the faculty members.

This presentation is comprised of two parts. The first part will be a presentation of a model as well as research results evaluating the pedagogical effectiveness of this program. This model will be presented in an effort to show the ways that experiential learning and scholarship of engagement can be integrated, implemented, and assessed (e.g., Faculty Survey of Student Engagement, National Survey of Student Engagement).

The second part of this presentation will be a discussion of pedagogical recommendations for developing a multi faceted client based partnership with a corporate sponsor. The discussion will focus specifically on providing suggestions, guidance, benefits, as well as the challenges to consider when developing such a partnership.