

From the Classroom to the Community: Service Learning through Sport Law

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In today's legal landscape sport administration students need to understand the issues of law that surround their prospective employment. Whether a student assumes a role as a coach, teacher, program administrator in recreation, or a manager in high school, college, Olympic or professional sport organization, legal concerns will be inextricably woven into his or her managerial responsibility. Teaching sports law to future sport administrators the professors' primary concern is to help the students to apply the legal and managerial concepts they learn in order to prevent injuries and limit liability. How can we, as professors, sharpen the students' problem solving skills and provide them with a deeper comprehension of course content assessing the legal problems surrounding sport in their local community?

The purpose of this study was to examine how students can use knowledge and skills learned in classrooms to implement a service learning project in the community. Students in collaboration with local sport organizations and high schools participated in an immersive learning initiative. They were asked to observe and evaluate risk and safety regulations at local sport organizations' in a group project assignment. Student visited the sites and spent 10 hours observing the effectiveness of risk management plans during operations, activities, games, tournaments following questionnaires and checklists as a guideline prepared by the faculty. Then they were asked to examine the results, analyze their findings, and compare and contrast their real life experience with the theoretical knowledge that they previously obtained in sport law classes. Finally, their task was to make recommendations and share those with the community partners in the form of an open public forum. The local sport organizations, high schools, and the Indiana High School Athletic Association were all invited to the forum for the student presentation and discussion.

As Overton and Malinauskas (2007) concluded, the implementation of service learning into the sport management curriculum is one avenue that enables students to experience the internal operations of sport organization and be an avenue of preparation for their internship. This research also determined that immersive learning and service learning engage the participants in an active student-driven learning process producing such benefits as integrating theory, research, and practice to skills in the real world, critical and analytical thinking about the relationship between the law and society.

This presentation would like to describe the development of the project by the faculty, the students' findings and recommendations to the community partners, and the Faculty analysis of the project's implementation – pros and cons – in their sport law classes. The main goal is to share the experiences of service learning projects related to sports law with the broader academic community for future developments.