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Engaging Sport Management Students In Large Lecture Classes: Teaching and Learning in The Mass Class  
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Teaching  Thursday, June 2, 2011  2:10 PM  60-minute symposium, roundtable, or workshop (Room 11)
Abstract 2011-045

Large-size classes, both face-to-face and online, have become increasingly popular on college and university campuses as institutions downsize faculty, yet at the same time strategize to escalate enrollment. Because it is economically effective to increase class sizes, administrators view the larger sections as greatly efficient (Maxwell and Lopus, 1995) because they can schedule fewer sections of the same course leaving the faculty free to teach additional content courses within their prescribed teaching loads. However, professors view larger sections as inefficient because they diminish their interaction with students and as a result often compel them to spend less time in evaluative methodologies (Bain, 2004). Given sport management’s popularity as a major field of study and thus its steadily growing student numbers, program administrators find themselves scheduling on-campus and online class sections with larger and larger enrollments each year. This roundtable addresses preparation and tactics for sport management professors to use in teaching the “mass class.” Davis’ (1993) suggestions for best teaching practices, having withstood the test of time, will be applied to the contemporary face-to-face mass class teaching model (e.g., management, notes preparation, content organization, general strategies, and lecture structure). In addition, because the effect of class size might even be more noticeable and challenging in an online environment, a contemporary lean on best practices will be featured for online instructors who face their own unique challenges in engaging all students and balancing instructor-centered and student-centered activities (Ko & Rossen, 2010). Finally, adding a valuable “fun factor” can help build positive attitudes and hold students’ interests in a mass class. Practices in support of the above and other strategies will be outlined in sport management specific contexts during this roundtable.

Management: Clearly outlining procedures in written and verbal form (e.g., planning for group work, outside assignment submission). These techniques place mass class governance in clear terms and theoretically eliminate or minimize future grievances.

Notes Preparation: Approaches for extricating major points and experimenting with lecture and activity formatting (e.g., using vibrant examples; incorporating visuals). These techniques are essential in order for instructors to present vital material and remain unbound to written notes.

Content Organization: Strategies for determining what content is best covered in class through which lecture type (e.g., interactive, problem-solving, case study, framed discussions), and using advanced properties of Blackboard and other secure portals to augment organization and delivery. These techniques are useful in deciding what content should be addressed in class and what content should be assigned outside of class.

General Strategies: Systems to assist faculty in becoming comfortable with course materials (e.g., anticipating questions by forming reading lists, observing professors familiar with mass class experiences, interspersing problem-solving in large lectures). These techniques are particularly crucial in introductory courses or courses that may be outside of one’s area of specific expertise.

Lecture Structure: Identifying the most important points for students to remember and using a logical and motivating progression to teach those points (e.g., lecturing in short time-blocks; incorporating texts and readings, avoiding data dumps). Structuring lectures using the “What’s In It For You” (WIIFY) technique (Weissman, 2003) reminds instructors that there must be something in the lecture that is meaningful for students and the instructor’s job is to communicate what this is and why it is meaningful. These techniques relate to designing the mass class to suit the audience rather than the subject matter as the core consideration.

Online Teaching: The freedom to teach online courses on their own schedule can be alluring to alluring to sport management faculty. But, online teaching can take 40% more time than teaching in a traditional classroom (Oullette, 1999). Add this extra...
time commitment to a teaching environment that is still uncomfortable for many sport management faculty and a large online course can be daunting. Online courses of more than 40 students require course design adjustment as well as a strategic approach to instructor interaction. These techniques relate to balancing student-centered and instructor-centered activities, setting up group and full class discussions, and effective evaluation tools that are critical to a successful class.

Fun Factor: Even in large courses, instructors can make a class fun. Students who walk into a class that has music playing or has a quirky quote on the screen will have a smile on their face as class begins. Avoiding “My Eyes Glaze Over” (MEGO) (Weissman, 2003) with students is half the battle in delivering content in large courses. An instructor who can keep the interest of students is an effective teacher. These techniques relate to positive student attitudes that can go a long way in ensuring that learning occurs in large size courses.