Preparing our Students for the World’s Stage? Perceptions of Sport Management Student Readiness for the 2010 Olympic Games

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Thursday, June 2, 2011
20-minute oral presentation
(Room 240)

Since the evolution of the study of sport management, considerable effort and attention has been made to examine and interpret the program requirements and appropriate management competencies that are required for our programs and students (Danylchuk & Boucher, 2003). Yet, little corresponding research has been done to examine the transferability and applicability of these established learning outputs to real-world sport situations. In fact, there is little examination of the perceived leadership and job preparedness received by sport management students as they transition to the sport workplace (Chun, 2003; Du, 2007) and much of these studies tend to be quite dated (Parks, 1991; Ulrich & Parkhouse, 1982). As such, this research will be invaluable to the continued development and enhancement of the sport management teaching academy.

This presentation will examine the perceptions of both current and former sport management students who were employed in paid and/or volunteer capacities in over ten different departments by the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic Games Organizing Committee (VANOC) prior to and during the 2010 Games. Specifically, a convenience sample of more than thirty students was derived from three mid- to large-sized Canadian sport management programs for the study. Students completed an online web-based survey to assess perceptions of their respective sport management programs' leadership preparedness for critical job responsibilities with respective to working within a major sport organization as well as in hosting a large scale sporting event. Using a combination of open- and closed-ended questions adapted from previous research (e.g., Ulrich & Parkhouse, 1982) students were also asked to identify workplace competencies utilized, as well as to assess what corresponding key industry teachings were missing and/or lacking from their programs of study. Finally, students were also asked to assess their overall level of satisfaction with their program’s sport industry preparedness. Data analysis will include open and axial coding of the qualitative responses, while descriptive statistics will be used for the quantitative portion of the survey. Collectively, this information will be used to extrapolate student readiness for the sport industry.

A presentation of the results will include a review of baseline data, student recommendations for program development, in addition to an overview of best practices gleaned. A concluding discussion will also be offered to further detail the findings and suggest challenges for our field and opportunities for enhanced and improved program development.