Behind the Curtain: Insights into the Faculty Hiring Process in Sport Management

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The field of Sport Management has experienced unprecedented growth in programs (Parkhouse & Pitts, 2001) and student numbers (Mondello, Mahony, Hums, & Moorman, 2002) during the past decade. The high demand for, yet limited supply of, qualified faculty members has created a pressing need in the field, as evidenced by a large quantity of annually advertised position vacancies (Mahony, Mondello, Hums, & Judd, 2004). Not surprisingly, recent research has revealed that approximately 31% of advertised Sport Management faculty positions go unfilled (Kian, Pedersen, & Vincent, 2008). While a lack of qualified candidates may be partially responsible for these unsuccessful faculty searches, another plausible explanation could be substandard interviewing practices.

Though Sport Management faculty candidates may learn a great deal of specialized discipline content during their doctoral studies, few may feel fully equipped with the knowledge and tools necessary to begin interviewing for faculty positions (Goldsmith, Komlos, & Gold, 2001). Although several NASSM presentations have examined the transition from doctoral student to first-year faculty member (Braunstein et al. 2008; Turner et al., 2011; Peetz et al., 2010) none have addressed the knowledge one should possess in preparation for interviewing and hiring. Likewise, most search committee members have had little or no training on the similarly arduous and important process of choosing a new colleague. Clearly, the long and laborious process of interviewing is something for which many could be better prepared (Vick & Furlong, 2008).

In times of budget cuts and resulting impacts on higher education, making the most of hiring opportunities is paramount. Not only are there significant expenses in bringing in candidates, but there are long-term consequences for making a bad hire. Maximizing the time spent during the interviewing experience from the standpoints of both the candidates and interviewers demands an effective process. Thus, the purpose of this roundtable discussion is to examine best practices within the hiring procedure for those looking to fill an open position, as well as those who will be candidates for sport management faculty positions. Accordingly, this roundtable discussion of the interview process from varying perspectives can better inform all parties involved. Established faculty members with diverse backgrounds were recruited to participate in this panel, including a dean, department chair, a unit coordinator, and a former assistant athletic director. Appropriately, all have had meaningful search committee experience at the unit, departmental, college, and/or university level.

Panelists will share their insight for conducting a successful search and things they have learned as an interviewee on the following general topics: correspondence and communication, fit between candidate and institution, formal and informal meetings, presentations, and the job offer. Some common themes that will be discussed in each of the topics include preparation and professionalism, creating a business-like atmosphere, and evaluation of information.