

2013 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM 2013)

Sport Management Faculty and Externally-Funded Grant Supported Research

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**20-minute oral presentation
(including questions)**

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In her analysis of the increasing corporatization shaping “the American university”, historian Ellen Shrecker (2010) noted the “...increasingly competitive atmosphere within the academy and the escalating pressure on faculty members to do more research, win more grants, and publish more articles” (p. 3). Documenting a shift in institutional priorities from teaching to research, “...almost every institution of higher learning [in the United States] sought to raise its perceived status. A faculty that won grants, developed graduate programs, and published extensively would, it was believed, add to the school’s prestige and thus made it a hotter commodity in the academic marketplace” (p. 188).

According to former Harvard University president, Derek Bok (2004), higher education administrators and faculty recognized over three decades ago the potential gains to be realized from branding the nation’s colleges and universities, entering the commercial market through exercises in profit-seeking behavior to maximize revenue production from teaching, research, and other campus activities, most visibly athletics. While these exercises have yielded a degree of relief from financial hardships caused by legislative cutbacks to education (McDonald, 2010), demand for limited financial resources (Lewin, 2012), national and global economic issues, and an increasingly competitive higher education market (Anderson, 2012), the financial benefits to be realized from the quest for ever larger external investments in higher education from the private sector have not brought the stability once expected and have wrought a series of issues that some experts believe threaten the mission of higher education in a free and democratic society.

Within the confines of the corporate university, where does sport management as a discipline fit and how do sport management faculty members navigate the escalating demands to publish, conduct more research, and win more grants? A review of literature revealed that there has been little written about the interface between sport management and the broader higher education community relative to increasing corporatization. A search of SPORTDiscuss, for example, yielded only one article that peripherally addressed the issue of grant funding in the evaluation of faculty members within physical education departments (Yu, 2003). In 1996, Parks and Bartley provided a snapshot of a changing sport management professoriate, reporting that younger sport management professors in that era held more doctorates and were publishing more than their predecessors.

Anecdotally, there is a perception that the field of sport management does not afford opportunities for external grant support at levels that would approximate levels found in, for example, engineering, health sciences, medicine, or the arts and humanities. Mondello, Mahony, Hums, & Moorman (2002) identified limited grant funding in sport management as a possible impediment to the hiring and retention of well-qualified faculty. In the Earl Ziegler Lecture at the 2008 NASSM Conference, Dan Mahony observed that sport management programs labored under the burden of not being seen as valuable compared to other academic programs because “...there is little grant money available for sport management research...”. He cautioned that, “As institutions become more focused on grant dollars, this will only become more of an issue” (p. 6).

The purpose of this exploratory study is to assess the state of the sport management discipline through these overarching questions:

Do sport management faculty perceive that external grant funding is more difficult to obtain compared to other disciplines? If so, what distinguishes sport management from other disciplines in this regard?

How much pressure do sport management faculty members experience to obtain external grant support for their research?

What are the identifiable conflicts of interest that sport management faculty members may experience in terms of pursuing external grant funding?

How do sport management faculty rank the three major areas typically used in faculty evaluation, specifically teaching, scholarship, and service?

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Sport management faculty in U.S. colleges and universities will be surveyed to assess the degree of success they have had in obtaining external grant funding, impediments to obtaining grant funding and the implications they perceive this has for the discipline, and their views on the conflicts of interest that arise around the pursuit of external grant funding. Data collection will include both quantitative as well as qualitative measures.

This study has the potential to provide informational support to sport management faculty in the tenure and promotion review process while also validating a concern that sport management faculty have articulated but has yet to be fully explored in terms of professional life and the present and future positioning of sport management within the academy.

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