Developing and Maintaining Successful Multileveled Relationships between Sport Management Internship Programs and Sport Franchises

Daniel Burt, Texas A&M-Kingsville
Michelle Zapata, Texas A&M-Kingsville

This presentation centers around the concept of building a strong multileveled relationship between sport management programs and minor/major league sport franchises, for the purpose of developing quality internships for students entering the sport industry. According to Chouinard (1993), the teacher/coordinators of sport management programs need to be active participants and highly skilled in creating successful internships and practical experiences for their students. This can be done by establishing several different types of relationships between the sport management program and local sport franchise.

Benefits of these multileveled relationships include accountability, high expectations for the student intern, and high exposure for the sport management program (Cunningham, Sagas, Dixon, Kent, & Turner, 2005). Well-developed internships in sport management may increase a student’s abilities in self-improvement and professionalism, preparing them for future careers in the sport industry (Chinomona & Surujlal, 2012).

However, there still continues to be concerns that student interns will suffer negative effects, such as being treated as cheap labor (Verner, Keyser, & Morrow, 2001). Additionally, students are more likely to have a realistic understanding about workloads related to the sports industry, as well as pay scales for entry level positions (Cunningham et al., 2005). This is where strong relationships between the sport management program and local sport franchise are critical in assisting the student intern in guiding their future career plans and considerations.

Recommendations for strengthening an internship program on multiple levels include creating a joint mentorship among the onsite supervisor of an internship and the academic coordinator, creating a plan for the professional development of the student, providing a joint assessment between the sport management program and sport franchise, etc…(Case, 2007). A brief discussion at the end of the presentation will be facilitated to compare internship practices that the attendees participate in with their own sport management programs. An internship coordinator from the sport management program and a graduate student who has successfully gone through this internship experience will share this presentation and their personal experiences.