Grant Writing and Sport Management Programs: What the Syllabi Say

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The pursuit of and success in grant writing to support research and publication interests is essential in the academic environment before us today (Gaugler, 2004; Kremer, 1990). Still, while grant writing and securing external funds are potentially remarkable achievements for tenure-track faculty, few formal opportunities are provided specifically within the field of sport management to help the field create a highly respected contribution to the discipline or home base (i.e., department, school, or college) coffers. The absence of grant success established by the discipline of sport management, as there are some individuals demonstrating success, should not be surprising because according to Gaugler (2004) and Walsh et al. (2013) few institutions provide comprehensive grant writing skills to their graduate students. Appropriately, Gaugler (2004) recommended that universities offer or improve existing graduate-level grant writing courses.

To date, few grant writing course syllabi has been analyzed. We recognize that some colleges and universities offer grant writing courses for graduate sport management students to take but the content of those materials (i.e., information of syllabi) are not well documented. Priester et al. (2008) identified course syllabi as a viable resource to discover information about institutions and their support of particular courses. As an example, Blankenship, Jones, and Lovett (2010) examined course offerings of 110 institutions of higher education in southwestern United States (i.e., Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas), discovering that 35 institutions provided grant-writing courses through course catalog descriptions. Within, they provided important information about course descriptions and components of grant-writing courses, but little else was commented on regarding course syllabi. Walsh et al. (2013) completed a content analysis from 125 course syllabi they recruited from institutions across the United States. Their investigation primarily centered on analyzing course descriptions, requirement, objectives, and recommend/required readings for themes. Their findings demonstrated that most programs focused on identifying tips for grant/proposal writing, information about the importance of budgeting, the critique process by grant evaluators, the identification of funding sources; and grant management [broadly interpreted].

Similarly, the purpose of this study is to collect course syllabi from colleges and universities within the United States identified as having sport management programs according to the North American Society for Sport Management to understand the layout and frequency of grant writing courses at those institutions. We will electronically search each of the listed sport management program areas curriculum, course offerings, and the course catalogs provided by each institution. Within, we will use the search words grant, fund (funding), and writ (write or writing) as previously established by Walsh et al. (2013) to discover information about whether a sport management program had a grant writing course offered or if another department in their institution provided for such an opportunity.

The results of this search process will be organized accordingly to follow the method outlined by Walsh et al. (2013): 1) university names; 2) course title; and 3) instructor contact information. Syllabi unavailable through electronic searches will prompt an individually addressed message (i.e., email) to the instructor of record to determine if the instructor taught a graduate grant-writing course and if that course was offered within the past 3 years. The recruitment emails to help collect locate difficult to find syllabi are to be sent individually to the grant-writing course instructors. Within, the purpose of the study will be briefly described.

Analysis of the syllabi will occur through a comprehensive content analysis. Previously completed content analysis on syllabi from Cashwell and Young (2004), Pieterse et al. (2009), and Stapleton and Leite (2005) are to be mimicked. Specific categories created for the content analysis include course description (Rezaee, Lambert, and Harmon 2006), course requirements (Cashwell and Young 2004; Pieterse et al. 2009; Stapleton and Leite 2005), course objectives (Pieterse et al. 2009), and a list of required and/or recommended readings (Pieterse et al. 2009; Stapleton and Leite 2005). The inclusion criteria required of this investigation involved the course being taught only at the graduate level course and “with at least 50% of information in the course structure, course description, course requirements, course objectives, and course readings focused on grant writing and related activities” (Walsh, et al., 2013, p. 75).
Preliminary results of this investigation provide useful guidelines for current and future course instructors with respect to grant writing in sport management. First, we suggest faculty focus their instruction on specific course activities that include collaboration, writing skills, searching methods, and preparation. Second, instructors should accept that “applied learning and practice of applicable grant-writing skills is important” (Walsh et al., 2013, p. 79). Third, required and/or recommended course readings can assist instructors but the authors of various textbooks and journal articles should address different types of grants because sport management is located in so many different homes. Textbooks for sport management should recognize the different homes for the discipline and encourage sport managers to seek out colleagues from other institutions or programs (i.e., interdisciplinary) to write and locate available grants. Finally, grant-writing course instructors should look to possibly train student through use of grant sites (e.g. grants.gov, National Institute of Health, National Science Foundation, National Endowment of the Humanities, Community of Science, etc.).