Sharing Knowledge and Celebrating Achievements within Sport Management Programs

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As educators at predominantly teaching institutes (PTIs), we applaud NASSM’s inclusion of a Teaching and Learning Fair every year as it allows educators to see how their colleagues view courses and assignments. We believe further conversation needs to be undertaken about what takes place at PTIs, and, specifically, in sport management programs at PTIs. The purpose of a roundtable on issues surrounding sport management programs at PTIs is three-fold: start a conversation that can lead to suggestions for future strategies that the NASSM Conference can undertake to engage more members in the importance of teaching and administration of sport management programs, suggest strategies we can carry out independently at our institutions, and use this conversation to create a learning community for faculty at PTIs with sport management programs. The panelists plan to share rich stories about what our teaching lives are like and how we interact with students at our institutions. This recognition and “celebration” of the important work we do, we believe, can build bridges between institutions and faculty members and lead to a deeper discussion marked by the further sharing of knowledge. Boyer (1990) noted that the scholarship of teaching requires bridges to be built between teachers and learners. To enhance that, we can build bridges between ourselves through sharing knowledge. This knowledge-sharing is a form of research that fits into Boyer’s interpretation of discovery. It allows teaching faculty to share the creative work in which we have engaged as educators, and it creates needed infrastructure for our future endeavors as educators. We do collect data at teaching institutes – in the form of student success stories. As Boyer’s Model suggests, data should be shared with a larger community to help us all improve.

Mahoney (2008) noted the need for great faculty members in his Ziegler Lecture. However, many faculty members show up for that first day of their university jobs not always knowing how to engage students. Many new faculty members that teach in sport management programs receive their doctoral degrees from universities that prize research rather than teaching. There is little education about how to be successful at a teaching college within their doctoral education. One way to learn how to engage students and educate them is to practice it. Another way is to have conversations with others who are in the same boat. The NASSM Conference can support this activity. With fewer scholarly research expectations, teachers at PTIs are able to concentrate on the truly important interaction between faculty and students. This consistent and authentic interaction by faculty in the lives of students is expected and prized by students who selected the often more intimate confines of a PTI over a larger research university. Richardson and Radloff (2014) concluded that students and staff should be allies in learning. Their data indicate students reported that ongoing interaction with those who teach them led to higher levels of student engagement and satisfaction along with lower attrition rates. The lower attrition rate finding is particularly helpful for PTIs, many of which are tuition-driven. Further, the researchers concluded that the advantages of close interaction with students allowed faculty to better understand students’ learning experiences, providing them with clues to better target their teaching.

As faculty in PTIs, we wear multiple hats and our influence starts before these students take one step onto campus:
• We are marketers, working closely with our admissions offices to make sure our departments are promoted correctly to high school students who are considering our programs; we help familiarize new students with our small and friendly campuses and let them know how, where and when to seek assistance;
• We are academic advisors, which entails much more than helping them select classes for the upcoming semester; we are a shoulder on which to vent and, sometimes, grieve; we are faculty advisors to sport management clubs;
• We are inventors as we plan experiential learning opportunities for our students that transcend traditional
classroom pedagogy; we monitor our students’ progress at internship sites; we capitalize on “teachable moments”;

- We are cheerleaders, we watch and support as our students compete at athletic events; we write recommendation letters for students as they seek internships and jobs; we embrace students at graduation, wondering how the time could go by so fast; and, as graduation weekend draws to a close, we celebrate students’ academic achievement, knowing that we played a small part in it.

To summarize, we watch our students grow and mature, facilitating this development along the way. We educate students in the different philosophies our institutions hold dear and have a long-lasting impact on how students approach the management of sport. Ken Bain, author of What the Best College Teachers Do, discussed this impact, writing, the “best teachers help their students learn in ways that make a sustained, substantial and positive influence on how those students think, act and feel” (Bain, 2004, p. 5).

An hour-long roundtable could highlight what faculty at PTIs do every day to have this sustained positive influence on students. The panelists will discuss the challenges of balancing teaching with the many other activities that engage us, including sport management club advising, collaborating with admissions to recruit and market to prospective students, creating links with industry professionals to enhance experiential learning opportunities, mentoring and advisement of students, and best practices for creating research and service opportunities at teaching institutions. Specifically, the panelists, with the help of the audience, will tackle these important questions: 1. What needs do sport-management students at PTIs have? 2. What are the main challenges with working in sport management departments at PTIs? 3. What unique recruitment strategies can PTIs use? 4. How can we better share ideas on dealing with the time-consuming work of being a faculty member at a PTI? 5. With the multiple hats they wear, how can department heads and chairpersons work more efficiently? 6. What can the NASSM Conference do to further engage teachers at PTIs? 7. How can a learning community be created where we can share ideas? The panelists have been chosen based on their status as a PTI faculty member and their interest in the topic area. Three panelists are chairpersons of their departments. Each member will present information on a different challenge faced in working in a sport management program at a PTI. Within the framework, the aforementioned questions will be addressed. The session will then move to a discussion between the panelists and the audience.