Lessons Learned: Navigating the Application Process and Succeeding at Teaching-Focused Institutions

Annemarie Farrell, Ithaca College
Rachel Madsen, Ithaca College
Heidi Parker, University of Southern Maine
John Borland, Springfield College

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As sport management programs continue to develop across the country, institutions with a teaching and advising focus has seen some of the greatest acceleration of adding new sport management degrees. As is true in many academic disciplines, research focused (R1) institutions often house the majority of doctoral programs to fill the growing need for faculty in teaching-oriented colleges. While the need to generate research has led many programs to incorporate expansive methodology classes into doctoral curriculums, often preparing graduate students for the unique demands of teaching-focused institutions can be less of a priority.

Although all institutions of higher education are in the business of teaching students, some colleges and universities place a greater emphasis on the production of research while others prioritize quality undergraduate teaching and faculty-student interaction. For the purposes of this proposal, we define a teaching-oriented institution as one that does not fall in the “Doctoral University – higher & highest research activity” categories, as classified by the Carnegie Classification of Higher Education (Carnegie Classification, 2016). Faculty at all types of colleges and universities must divide their time amongst teaching, research, and service activities and this division is normally determined by the teaching load that is set forth by the university or department (Honeycutt & Ford, 2015). Teaching-oriented institutions expect faculty to devote much more time and attention to students, both in and out of the classroom, and normally require a teaching load of 3-5 courses per semester (Kessler, Specter, & Gavin, 2013). Faculty at research-oriented institutions teach fewer classes, conduct fewer office hours, and are expected to spend more time on research, which results in more journal publications and national level presentations (Honeycutt & Ford, 2015).

Sport management is still a young discipline that continues to evolve and undergraduate students in the many sport management programs worldwide need quality teachers to help them become steeped in the discipline and become critical thinkers. Outstanding teachers should 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). While many sport management faculty openings often exist at teaching-oriented institutions, most PhD programs are housed in research-oriented institutions where PhD students learn to be future researchers – these programs often do not prepare new PhDs very well for faculty positions at teaching-oriented institutions (Adams, 2002; Bartkowski, Deem & Ellison, 2015; Henderson & Buchanan, 2007). When new PhDs do obtain faculty positions at teaching-oriented institutions, they may not be ready for the rigors of the classroom which can be made painfully aware in teaching evaluations. Scoring high marks on teaching evaluations is important as administrators use teaching evaluations as an important source of assessment (Shao, Anderson & Newsome, 2007) and heavily factor in tenure determinations at teaching-oriented institutions (Diette & Kester, 2015).

To avoid hiring new faculty who may not succeed, search committees at teaching-oriented institutions often place their emphasis on determining person-organization fit, which can be characterized as competencies that are needed by the college and personal attributes that fit with the college’s organizational culture and values (Chatman, 1989; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). When considering person-organization fit, faculty who prefer more social interactions may find more job satisfaction at teaching-oriented institutions (Chatman, 1989; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Kristoff, 1996). Faculty at teaching-oriented institutions report a high level of job satisfaction related to getting to know students on a personal level and having a profound influence in the life of their students (Lang, 2016). The emphasis on teaching effectiveness however, does not suggest that faculty at teaching-oriented institutions need not publish research. In recent years, all faculty have experienced an increased level of pressure for research productivity. Additionally, a
higher concentration of PhDs has resulted in greater competition for faculty positions. This can lead hiring committees to look favorably on applications with substantially more publications than previously expected from new hires (Tang & Chamberlain, 2003).

The emphasis on developing research expertise in PhD programs and increased publishing expectations by evaluators contrasted with the bulk of faculty openings being located in teaching-centered institutions requiring teaching expertise in numerous different courses, can leave new faculty facing a perplexing application process and job environment. Therefore, the purpose of this panel presentation is to discuss both landing a job at a teaching and advising centered institution, as well as practical strategies for being successful in this environment. Consisting of sport management faculty members at a teaching and advising focused institutions, this roundtable will address their unique experiences and perspectives. Specific topics to be addressed include the follow:

1. Faculty expectations at a teaching-centered university
2. Strategies to manage multiple course preparations
3. Approaches to advising
4. Realities of being a department of 1 or 2 faculty members.
5. Maintaining a research agenda while balancing teaching and advising
6. Perspectives of preparing CVs to highlight desired qualifications
7. Important questions to ask at interviews

Time will be allocated for audience participation and interaction, and blank cards will be handed out to solicit questions for the panel. It is hoped the topic and format will lend itself to helping current doctoral students and faculty navigate the job search and transition to academic programs with large teaching and advising demands.