Building Diversity Through Research, Service, Advising, and Teaching: A Workshop Sponsored by the NASSM Diversity Committee

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Teaching/Learning - Professional Development (Other)
60-minute symposium, roundtable, or workshop
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Traditionally, sport management faculty members conducted their research in the isolated ivory towers of academia. But more than 20 years ago, they were called to better serve industry practitioners – in response to the “navel gazing” of academics, Weese (1995) considered how we can best contribute to and influence sport management practitioners. Despite the fact that the academy rewards those who publish frequently, research should be “focused on the management practitioner” and not “the academic community” (p. 238). Since then, there has been a growth in applied research. Daniels (2016) described applied research as that which provides information to solve a particular problem. This workshop will provide a short overview of the value of applied research, some examples of its forms, and how it can positively impact practitioners, particularly in areas of diversity.

Weese (1995) suggested eight ways to incorporate practitioners into sport management research; most focused on integrating conferences (i.e., the North American Society for Sport Management) and publications (i.e., Journal of Sport Management) with practitioners. Additionally, researchers may choose to take their research directly to practitioners. Examples of this include collaboration with media, such as Nefertiti Walker’s participation in espnW’s Women + Sports Summit (Fagan, 2014). Social media marketing was used to increase recycling efforts at tailgates (Martin, Ross, & Irwin, 2015). The Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport spearheaded the recent #HERESPFOOF social media campaign (Antunovic & Linden, 2014), and partnered with a local PBS station to create a documentary on gendered media coverage (Daniels, 2016). Lastly, Daniels (2016) has taken her research directly to the public, through presentations at local or community audiences, such as the Girl Scouts or Rotary Clubs. Further recommendations for applied research include collaborations and partnerships (Melton, 2015; Walker & Melton, 2015; Welty Peachey, 2015), such as those within media, formed as “think tanks,” and in the realm of sport for development and peace (SDP). Lastly, service-learning opportunities may provide a link between research and scholarship (Welty Peachey, 2015).

Within the context of a diverse society, service-learning programs provide avenues to explore civic engagement, environmental protection, balance of rights, and social justice. Service-learning programs are distinct from other approaches to experiential-learning programs because of their “intention to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring” (Furco, 1996, p. 5). Since “all learning does not occur in the classroom” (Jacoby, 1996, p. 6), service-learning programs offer unique opportunities for all: students, faculty, community members, and academic institutions to be civically engaged and socially responsible.

Service-learning programs have helped students grow personally and intellectually. Eyler and Giles (1999) revealed that through service learning students develop an appreciation for diverse cultures and recognition of stereotyping. Furthermore, service learning has been a catalyst for creating more tolerance of ethnic diversity (Leming, 2001), students’ learning (Ward, 2000) and faculty’s scholarship (Driscoll, Holland, Gelmon, & Kerrigan, 1996). In the community, service learning has helped build lasting ties between communities and universities, while creating an intersection of theory and practice.

Beyond scholarship and service, faculty may have an impact on diversity through their interactions with students. Research on student development has demonstrated that faculty, in their role as advisors, can have a significant impact on the professional and personal development of college students (Wendler et al., 2012). In general, the quality of impact is dependent upon the effectiveness of the advisor-advisee relationship. While the advisor-advisee
relationship is impacted by a number of factors, one of the more prominent is the degree of similarity between the advisor and advisee (Schlosser et al., 2011). As is common with other social relationships, faculty tend to be most attracted to, and thus more likely to form meaningful relationships with, students with whom they share common traits (Blackburn, Chapman, & Cameron, 1981; Schlosser et al., 2011). Though examples of such common traits often include surface-level traits such as race and gender, they can also include deep-level traits such as research interests and career trajectory. Consequently, this “cloning” practice in advising (Blackburn et al., 1981) can create inequitable experiences and opportunities for students who did not share similar traits as faculty. As the general student population continues to increase in both surface-level and deep-level diversity, a discussion of how sport management faculty navigate the complex task of advising similar and dissimilar others is greatly needed (Schlosser et al., 2011).

Although we see increased diversity in sport participants from the grass roots level to the professional ranks as well as increased acceptance of these diverse populations, the field of sport management is still lacking in diversity (Jones, Brooks, & Mak, 2008). The composition of faculty and students in sport management departments closely mirrors that of higher administration in sport: heterosexual, White men (Jones et al., 2008; Moore, Parkhouse, & Konrad, 2004). Research even suggests that female academics in kinesiology departments today face many challenges similar to those faced by their peers 40 years ago (Ransdell et al., 2008). This lack of diversity within the classroom is especially problematic given that White male faculty are less likely to include topics related to diversity in their courses (Mayhew & Grunwald, 2006). Although most sport management programs include a common core set of classes, including topics such as: (1) sport history, sociology, and psychology, (2) foundations of sport management, (3) sport marketing, communication, and economics/finance, (4) sport law and ethics, and (5) internships, there are no formal requirements of courses students must complete set forth by governing or accreditation bodies. Decisions of what to include in specific courses is left to the discretion of the university and instructor teaching the course. Topics dealing with diversity such as gender, race, sexual orientation, and ability may not relate overtly to certain courses (e.g., sport marketing, sport governance), and may be uncomfortable to discuss with students. This workshop will offer tips for incorporating diversity topics into sport management courses as well as methods for creating effective discussion on diversity topics with students.

After a brief overview of each topic, the workshop will break into four small groups, engaging in a discussion facilitated by scholars in each topic. After 15 minutes of discussion, participants will be asked to switch groups. Thus, participants will have an informal opportunity to meet people with similar interests and discuss issues related to their responsibilities as faculty members and graduate students. This will benefit the NASSM membership by engaging faculty and graduate students who may not previously have attended Diversity Committee workshops. The wide range of topics, focused on the major responsibilities of most academics, will appeal to a broader audience.

Topic: Facilitators
Diversity in Applied Research: Dr. Nefertiti A. Walker, University of Massachusetts, Amherst & Dr. E. Nicole Melton, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Diversity in Service: Dr. Jennifer McGarry, University of Connecticut & Dr. Rachel Madsen, Ithaca College
Diversity in Advising: Dr. John Singer, Texas A&M University & Dr. Billy Hawkins, University of Georgia
Diversity in Teaching: Dr. Robertha Abney, Slippery Rock University & Dr. Michelle Gacio Harrolle, University of South Florida