Traditionally, the term college implied moving away from home, living in a dorm and going to classes at various times of the day with lots of “down” time in between. Well, that picture of higher education was transformed with the advent of the internet and online course delivery.

Sener (2015) defined online learning as courses that are delivered entirely online without any required face-to-face or campus requirements, the opposite of traditional courses. For further clarification, Online-Education.net (2017) asserts “the main difference between online and traditional learning is the fact that online education liberates the student from the usual trappings of on-campus degree programs - including driving to school, planning their schedule around classes, and being physically present for each sequence of their coursework” (para. 1). Affirming words like flexibility, self-paced and lower costs were the touted benefits of introducing online courses. The United States Department of Education (2010) reported that online learning (fully or blended) offers the same (if not modestly better) learning experiences for students.

This “new” way of learning was not without its naysayers who questioned quality, rigor, and accreditation. “Even with the popularity of online courses and degree programs, many questions remain as to the perception, educational value, and integrity of these programs” (Butts, 2009). Moreover, Bidwell’s research (2013) supported the idea of the value and format of online learning, but questioned the quality, further stipulating that the content (instruction) and the deliverer (instructor) were not the same as face-to-face delivery.

Some sport management programs now offer at least some online courses, while now some offer complete degrees online. This raises questions for the academic discipline in need of discussion. In the push from administrators to offer more online courses across campuses, what are the consequences for faculty and for students? How can we determine if online courses or programs are equal in quality to classroom courses and programs? Does delivery method matter? Are online courses “good” for a program? How much online learning in a program is good?

The question of quality also demands discussion in regard to curriculum standards and accreditation. Do curriculum standards account for online courses, and, if so, how? Do accrediting agencies include guidelines and standards for online courses? For the field of sport management, does the Commission on Sport Management Accreditation (COSMA) include guidelines and standards for online courses and content, and, if so, how? Does COSMA include a separate review for online courses and/or programs, and how does it compare to its other guidelines and accreditation standards?”

In this roundtable session, we will provide an overview of the current setting for online learning, present findings of research regarding online courses and programs, and to offer a place for discussion for faculty and students interested in online learning. The session will include discussions with faculty with extensive online teaching experience, and faculty with experience with sport management curriculum standards and accreditation. Lastly, we seek to facilitate discussion on the state of sport management online courses and degree programs, current sport management curriculum standards, accreditation processes and issues, and contemplate future implications and opportunities for our discipline.