Enhancing Career Readiness through Experiential Learning: A Case Study of Classroom-as-Sport Organization

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20-minute oral presentation (including questions) 1:45 PM
Abstract 2019-193 Room: Napoleon A2

Institutions of higher education are facing increased scrutiny from students and employers. Students are concerned about the high cost of tuition, debt, and the uncertainty of a job after graduation. Employers are concerned about obtaining college graduates with job-ready skills (Bolman & Gallos, 2011; Dwyer, Mccloud, & Hodson, 2012).

With the growth of sport as a major industry, there is an increased need to better train students by providing them with the kind of learning environments necessary to prepare them for the workforce with the skills and experiences most desired by employers. How to go about creating the type of learning environments that enhance student learning about sport organizations is the challenge faced by most faculty. While the sport management curriculum is rife with opportunities for developing career readiness skills, all-to-often, the learning environment is tailored toward a more physically passive style of academic learning. This more traditional style of teaching and learning involves having students listen to lectures, read materials, take test and quizzes, write research papers, and watch films or video (Parkhouse, 2005). The strength of this method of teaching and learning is that it has a strong theoretical underpinning. The weakness of this method is that it fails to engage students in the pedagogical value of “real world” experiences in sport organizations (Mumford & Kane, 2006).

In response to the increased scrutiny, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) developed a series of competencies that broadly prepare college graduates for a successful transition into the workplace (Griffin, 2016; NACE, 2016). In this presentation, we go beyond theory and link NACE Career Readiness Competencies to best practices in sport management education using the Classroom-as-Organization (CAO) experiential learning model. The CAO model blends the features of an academic course and an organization simultaneously. Students act as employees of an organization created to manage projects (Cocieru, McDonald, & Lyle, 2017; Sheehan, McDonald, & Spence, 2009).

This presentation discusses the CAO model as a case study and is designed to help attendees explore the question: How can sport management programs better prepare students to make the transition from classroom to career?

In this presentation participants will:

1. Learn the NACE Career Readiness Competencies and how they can be successfully integrated into a sport management course.

2. Learn examples of experience-based learning strategies that have been successfully used to help students gain experiences and competencies that make them better prepared to enter the workforce.

3. Understand the significance of providing students with interwoven and intensive experiential learning opportunities and the relationship on student engagement and learning.

4. Understand the benefits and unintended consequences involved with this type of pedagogy.

5. Identify ways students gain skills that make them desirable to employers.

A well designed experiential learning course can be beneficial to sport management students because it helps bring scholarship to life. Through active involvement, it provides learning strategies that help students gain experiences sport organizations are seeking. More importantly, it affords them real-world learning experiences that help develop career readiness competencies (Dees & Hall, 2012; Mumford, Inungu, Johnson, & Smith, 2009; Seemiller, 2018).