Perceived Benefits of Active, Experiential Learning in a Sport Management Curriculum

Jennifer Willett, Kennesaw State University
Bernie Goldfine, Kennesaw State University
Chris Brown, Kennesaw State University

Saturday, June 1, 2019
Room: Napoleon A2

As Sport Management achieved standing as a discipline, Ulrich & Parkhouse (1982) found that one form of experiential learning (e.g., internship), was the most relevant course students completed during their academic studies. Today, the same holds true with the importance of experiential learning being highly valued in the sport management curriculum (Foster & Dollar, 2010; Koo, Diacin, Khojasteh, & Dixon, 2016). In a broader context, research in the area of teaching methodology, has consistently revealed that active methods of instruction (including experiential learning), have advantages over passive, lecture-based instruction in terms of developing deep learning of materials, promoting positive attitudes toward autonomous learning, as well as acquiring interpersonal skills and improved self-efficacy (Shimazoe and Aldrich, 2010). In essence, active learning requires students to engage in meaningful learning activities and be very contemplative of what they are doing (Prince, 2004).

To discover the significance sport management curriculum plays in preparing students for internships and employment after graduation, this longitudinal research study examined what Sport Management undergraduate students perceived to be the most beneficial course in an undergraduate Sport Management degree program. Fifteen required courses comprising the Sport Management curriculum were rated by students as to their perceived beneficial nature. Data was gathered over a six-year period from students (n=65) who were enrolled in a large Southeastern university. After the completion of their internship (480 contact hours), students were specifically asked to rate each Sport Management course relative to how beneficial they were in their professional preparation and internship. Using a 5-point Likert Scale (1 being least, and 5 being most beneficial) students rated their perceived benefits of the required courses in the undergraduate sport management program.

Results revealed that graduating Sport Management students consistently rate their experiential learning classes and activities as the most vital aspect of the curriculum, and best preparation for employment after graduation, as compared with the other courses required in the program. Specifically, the Practicum/Seminar was rated the highest with a mean of 4.28, followed by Sport Marketing (4.06), and Sport Facility and Event Management (4.03). No other courses, achieved a rating of above 4.0, but the other courses rated as most beneficial from the students’ perspective include Principles of Marketing (3.80), Public Speaking (3.78), Legal Aspects of Sport (3.75), and Introduction to Sport Management (3.75). All of the above courses emphasized active, experiential learning components (as compared to passive lecture based formats) from running a sporting event to marketing an athletic event. From the student perspective, the least valuable courses were all in the area of budget/finance including: Introduction to Accounting (2.53), Sport Budgeting/Finance (3.01), and Sport Economics (3.01).

The findings of this study support the notion that active, experiential learning should be infused into all Sport Management courses. In addition to presenting the results of the survey, this presentation will highlight some of the creative ways, active, experiential learning was integrated in the highly rated courses.