Exploring the Relationship Between Quantity and Quality of Sport Management Internships and Career-Related Outcomes

Emily Plunkett, University of Florida
Michael Sagas (Advisor), University of Florida

Teaching/Learning - Professional Development (Other)  Saturday, June 1, 2019
20-minute oral presentation (including questions)  8:55 AM
Abstract 2019-296  Room: Napoleon A2

Experiential learning plays an integral role in sport management curricula, with approximately 80% of undergraduate sport management programs requiring a sport management internship prior to graduation (Eagleman & McNary, 2010; Jones, Brooks, & Mak, 2008; Schoepfer & Dodds, 2010). While often not required, some students may complete multiple internships over their college careers (Brandon-Lai, Armstrong & Bunds, 2016). Although researchers have recommended that students should pursue multiple experiential learning opportunities in college (Foster & Dollar, 2010; Foster, Schwartz & Hatlem, 2009), research has just begun to explore the potential value stemming from multiple experiential learning experiences in undergraduate sport management programs. For example, Hayes Sauder and Davis (2017) investigated the relationship between earlier experiential learning and vocational growth during capstone internships in sport management, but little data exist linking completion of multiple internships to career development.

Published research has explored the effects of single internships on career-related outcomes with mixed results. Some studies have indicated internships may leave students with lowered anticipated career satisfaction, fewer intentions to seek a career in the industry and increased confusion about their career path (Cunningham, Sagas, Dixon, Turner & Kent, 2005; Odio, Sagas, & Kerwin, 2014). Others have suggested positive impacts of internships and experiential learning, such as greater satisfaction in careers post-graduation (Gault, Redington & Schlager, 2000; Halfer, Graf & Sullivan, 2008; Kysor & Pierce, 2000) and increased vocational identity (Esters & Retallick, 2013). Scarcely any work has investigated the value of sport management undergraduate students completing multiple internships, and little to no studies have explored the impacts of both quality and quantity of internships on career development outcomes. Rooted in experiential learning theory, this study aims to determine if the quantity of internship experiences and the perceived quality of a capstone experience impact graduating sport management students’ levels of vocational identity and career maturity, as well as their intent to enter the sport management profession upon graduation. Specifically, after controlling for internship quality factors (compensation, internship geographic location, task quality, perception of supervisory support and time demands satisfaction), we aim to investigate if the number of industry-relevant internships students engage in prior to their senior internship shapes each of the study outcomes.

The study is ongoing and consists of undergraduate sport management students completing a capstone senior internship in their final semester. Data is being collected from approximately 100 students from one large university in the US across multiple academic semesters. Results will be analyzed using a series of hierarchical multiple regressions. We anticipate that the results will inform scholars of internship conditions that influence a student’s perception of internship quality, and to what extent multiple internship experiences shape relevant outcomes of the capstone internship. Results will also offer implications for internship coordinators regarding how to best counsel future students on internship quality factors that may impact site selection, as well as on the utility of participating in multiple internships.