Various aspects of the Sport Management discipline have been discussed and debated in the academic literature for several decades (Chalip, 2006; Nite and Bernard, 2017; Parkhouse & Ulrich, 1979; Parkhouse, Ulrich, & Soucie, 1982; Slack, 1996; Zeigler, 1987). Researchers have shared studies and/or Earle F. Zeigler Award Lecture content that examined the direction of the Sport Management field (Costa, 2005; Mahoney, 2008; Zeigler, 1987), issues related to the Sport Management research agenda (Chalip, 2006; Doherty, 2012), and the demographics and career expectations of Sport Management students (Barnhill, Czekanski, & Pfleegor, 2018) among other topics. The purpose of the proposed 60-minute symposium is to add to our self-examination of the Sport Management field by discussing entire degree programs and specific degree concentrations that cater to niche student interests within the broader Sport Management context (e.g., sport marketing).

Earle F. Zeigler Award Lecture honorees have provided a variety of views regarding the proper direction for Sport Management research. Slack (1996) asserted the field needed a broader “domain of operation” (p. 98). Chalip (2006) called for the development of specific Sport Management theory. Doherty (2012) emphasized the need for interdisciplinary work. The field clearly has diverse voices and opinions which makes an assessment of niche program offerings of similar interest to these research discussions.

Chelladurai (1992) seemed to foresee the development of niche Sport Management programs and concentrations in his 1991 Earle F. Zeigler Award Lecture. Chelladurai (1992) provided examples of prospective students who were interested in considering Sport Management, but worried the field was too restrictive. His prospects wondered whether Sport Management would sufficiently prepare someone for fitness management or sport marketing. These questions could be answered by stating Sport Management is a broad discipline that is inclusive of these niche areas. However, another option would be for the Sport Management field to respond to these niche interests with degree programs and concentrations tailored to student consumer interests. At the time of Chelladurai’s (1992) lecture he asserted “we do not have the workforce to specialize in the subareas of our field.” (p. 216) while also noting that fields patronizing Sport Management for a “lack of specialization, sophistication, and a body of knowledge that they could call their own” (p. 216) were once ridiculed for the same things. However, with the passing of time, the presenters in the proposed presentation work within Sport Management programs that have found the time and resources to specialize.

Panelists will discuss the history and rationale for the creation of their respective niche degree programs and concentrations. The panelists will discuss positives that accompany their niche offerings as well as any difficulties that their niche offerings present. Audience participation will be accepted throughout the symposium.