

5-1-2008

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Recommended Citation

Jones, D. F., Brooks, D. D., & Mak, J. Y. (2008). Examining sport management programs in the United States. *Sports Management Review*, 11(1), 77-91.

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Examining Sport Management Programs in the United States

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Abstract

Analysis of sport management programs is important for potential students as well as for the future development of sport management as an academic discipline. The historical evolution of sport management programs in the United States moved from the physical education model to a more business-oriented curriculum. Given this historical development, debate exists among sport management professionals regarding administrative housing of current and future sport management programs. The purposes of this study were to: (1) Provide an overview of the development of U.S. sport management programs, (2) Provide a snapshot of sport management programs including admissions requirements and faculty profiles, and (3) Analyse critical issues facing the field of sport management. A random sample of 137 institutions offering undergraduate sport management programs in the United States were invited to participate in the study; 50 usable surveys were returned. Results indicate a lack of diversity (racial and gender) among sport management faculty, and a large proportion of part-time faculty without a terminal degree in the field.

Sport management professional programs in the United States continue to gain popularity, recognition, and credibility in the nearly four decades since the founding of a single master's program at Ohio University in 1966 (Stier, 1993). Expansion in the field of sport management challenges those individuals in pursuit of a sport management career to possess a depth of knowledge and a broad range of competence in specific areas of study within the professional programs requirements. As a result of the demand for educated and trained individuals in the sport management industry, numerous professional preparation programs has been established throughout the United States (Alsop & Fuller 2000). Sport management outside the United States continues to grow as well. For example, there are fourteen sport management programs in Europe, and twelve programs in Canada. Australia and New Zealand have eight and four, respectively (NASSM, 2007).

Since 1966, sport management programs in America have witnessed significant growth and increasing popularity due to enormous student interest. In addition universities are expanding the scope of physical education programs from a teaching-based model to more "holistic" interdisciplinary programs, including exercise physiology, sport and exercise psychology, and sport management. The new physical education (kinesiology) expanded to meet market demands. The historical evolution of sport management programs in the United States moved from the physical education model to a more business-oriented model. The purpose of this research is to provide an overview of the development of sport management academic programs, provide a descriptive critique of existing sport management programs including admissions requirements and faculty profiles and analyse critical issues facing the field of sport management. Lastly, this manuscript

will discuss the potential growth of sport management worldwide and suggest how this growth may impact on sport management pedagogy worldwide.

Sport Management: A Growing Discipline

Before sport management became an academic discipline, great sports figures such as Walter O' Malley (Brooklyn/Los Angeles Dodgers) were actively campaigning for a specified academic program that would train professionals to manage sport (Masteralexis, Barr, & Helmes, 1998). History records that in 1966, the first masters degree program in sport management was established at Ohio University by Dr. James G. Mason (NASPE-NASSM, 1993). By 1978 there were twenty sport management graduate programs and three undergraduate programs in the United States (Parkhouse, 1978). Since 1966, the number of degrees offered in sport management has increased. In 1992, the total number of degrees offered by colleges and universities in the United States, including associate, bachelor, masters, and doctorate, totaled 567 (Lambert, 1999). By 1995, the number more than doubled to 1,173 degrees (Lambert, 1999). In 2003, 166 institutions were identified by the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM). However, there are just 34 undergraduate programs, 25 masters degree programs, and a mere 2 doctoral programs that are approved through joint effort of the National Association of Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) and the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM). The general purpose of the current NASPE-NASSM standards is "provide some level of quality assurance to students enrolling in sport management programs and to employers hiring graduates of these programs" (AAHPERD). This is the essence of current sport management pedagogy (NASSM, 2003).

The Development of Sport Management Curriculum and Accreditation

According to Zakrajsek (1993), “for our emerging profession, the time is right to set quality and quantity standards for our product and not leave the ‘sorting out’ process in the hands of employ-ers” (p. 5). In 1986, the National Association for Sports and Physical Education (NASPE) established a sport management task force to begin the process of developing curricular guidelines (NASPE-NASSM, 1993). The first NASPE-NASSM guidelines were published in 1987. Concerned over the lack of identifiable common knowledge across sport management curricula, the NASPE-NASSM Joint Task Force on Sport Management Curriculum and Accreditation developed a competency-based minimum body of knowledge needed for baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral level programs (NASPE-NASSM, 1993). As a result, in 1993, NASPE and NASSM approved *The Standards for Voluntary Accreditation of Sport Management Programs* (NASPE-NASSM, 1993). This set of standards and protocol for approving sport management preparation programs was introduced to the academy with program approval beginning in 1994 (Stier, 1993).

The document contains a comprehensive set of minimum competency areas that should exist within the baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral sport management degree programs. In addition, the document includes standards on the critical mass of sport management offerings and faculty. DeSensi, Kelly, Blanton, and Beitel (1990) noted, “since the struggle for academic acceptance is widespread, it is imperative that faculty accept the responsibility to examine the credibility of these programs” (p. 32). The objectives of the critical mass guidelines are to provide students with a foundation of sport management course work taught by appropriate professionals. The NASPE-NASSM approval process fosters the attainment and maintenance of excellence in undergraduate and graduate education programs. According to Fielding, Pitts, & Miller, (1991, p.

4), “accreditation by a nationally recognized agency made up of professional educators within a particular field is the highest level assessment. It implies that the professional membership of a field, such as sport management, is willing to accept the responsibility for ensuring educational quality and is willing to be held accountable for the quality of its collective graduates.” NASPE-NASSM certification is seems to be an important marketing tool as well, since, “nearly 90 percent of sport management students surveyed indicated that a program’s reputation was an important consideration in choosing a school” and a prestigious reputation comes hand-in-hand with accreditation (Walker & Lough, 1995, p.28). The NASPENASSM curriculum standards were developed to meet the contemporary needs of the sports industry. Institutions with sport management programs approved by the NASPE-NASSM Joint Task Force are expected to produce high-quality future professionals with the necessary job skills to work in the sport industry.

NASPE-NASSM Standards

The content areas prescribed in the NASPE-NASSM standards provide students with a body of knowledge to prepare them for careers in sport management. Twenty percent of the total number of credit hours required for a baccalaureate degree, exclusive of the field experience credit, must be sport management course work (NASPE-NASSM, 1993). The administrative unit for the sport management program should be responsible for content delivery to students. Courses, experiences, and competencies must be integrated into a curriculum that is identified as the sport management program.

Core content areas were also established to provide undergraduate students with the common body of knowledge necessary in sport management. The programs include: behavioral dimensions in sport, management and organizational skills in sports, ethics in sport management,

marketing in sport, communication in sport, finance in sport, economics in sport, legal aspects of sport, governance in sport, and field experience in sport management. The undergraduate guidelines address the three components of a sport management curriculum: (1) the foundational areas of study comprising full courses in business management, marketing, economics, accounting, finance, and computer science; (2) the application areas of study comprised of sport foundations (e.g., sport sociology, sport psychology, sport history/philosophy, women in sports), sport law, sport economics, sport marketing/promotion, and sport administration; and (3) field experiences including practica and internships (Brassie, 1989). The graduate guidelines build upon the undergraduate preparation and include: (1) two required courses in research methods and a project or thesis; (2) advanced application electives in sport law, sport economics, sport marketing/promotion, sport administration, facility design and event management; and (3) field experiences (Bell & Countiss, 1993).

The practicum and the internship are a series of professionally related work experiences that should move from general experience to a more specific focus as each student progresses through the curriculum; internships should account for approximately 15 percent of the total curriculum (Kelley, Beitel, DeSensi, & Blanton, 1994). Desensi et al. (1990) reported that 59 percent of institutions required a practicum and 63 percent required an internship. The advantages of field experience have been well researched. Cobb (1997) noted that the advantages of internships are to “assist to clarify career interests and goals, provide interns with opportunities to apply classroom theory, enhance student knowledge and skills in sport management, and help students build confidence, maturity, and professionalism, as well as develop future contacts for employment” (p. 97). The types of practicum and internship experiences available are unique to each sport management concentration and setting (Kelley et al., 1994). Nonetheless, the

practicum should be broadly-based, should provide part-time work experiences, and should lead to a focused internship (Kelley et al., 1994). Internships are best offered as a sequence of experiences at various times in the 4-year curriculum (Kelley et al., 1994). The internship should be, at a minimum, a one-semester, full-time applied work experience directly focused toward each student's professional sport management career goals, and should be the culminating experience in an undergraduate program of study (Kelley et al., 1994).

Worldwide Growth in Sport Management Programs

An overview of sport management worldwide reveals significant growth since 1993. The European Association of Sport Management, (EASM) was initiated in 1993 to bring a diverse group of professionals and academics together to establish a network of experts who have international connections as well as management responsibility for much of European Sport. The main emphasis of EASM is to promote scientific study and enhance scholarship within the sport management field. EASM is attempting to spread sport management research throughout all of Europe. However, outside of the United States, Australia has the highest concentration of Universities granting new Doctoral Degrees in sport management. Australian Catholic University, Deakin University, Griffith University, University of Technology, Sydney, and University of Western Sydney, all offer Doctoral Degrees in sport management. Latin America is growing its' sport management programs as well. Sport management students located in South America attend school for four and a half years to obtain a degree from a traditional physical education curriculum. South American students can select a concentration in physical education, recreation, kinesiology, training, sport management, or coaching. Cuba, Brazil, Mexico, Panama,

and Colombia are the only Latin American countries that offer a one year post-graduate degree in sport management.

Program Location

The phenomenal growth associated with sport management within the U.S. and throughout the world has not been without controversies, challenges, and problems (Stier, 1993). There is no consensus about where sport management should be housed at the University level, whether in schools of physical education, business, or a separate academic entity altogether (Stier, 1993). Controversies surround the terms used to describe the profession, such as sport(s) or athletic management, sport(s) business or administration, and athletic administration (Stier, 1993). These controversies have plagued universities and colleges for many years. The program philosophy in many instances is driven by the department chair or other university administrators. In some cases, faculty teaching in sport management programs have dissimilar philosophies. In some cases, this has led to alternative programs being initiated within the same university, and in some cases within the same department (Stier, 1993).

In 1993, the vast majority of sport management programs in the U.S. (undergraduate and graduate) were housed in departments or schools of physical education and, in a few instances, in departments of recreation and park and/or leisure studies (Sawyer, 1993). Brassie (1990) reported that most of the programs resided in physical education departments as an alternative curriculum to physical education teacher education.

Fielding et al. (1991) stated, "Program ownership has serious implications during times of accreditation. Relationships with schools of business directly influence two important parts of any sport management program. First, they influence student access to essential coursework that

is the property of the school of business. Second, they influence what can be offered in the area of sports applications” (p. 8). Some even suggest that “sport management programs be their own departments or schools” (McMahon, Grappendorf, & Orejan, 2002).

Sport management programs represent a variety of sports-related settings including: recreational and sports facilities; hotels and resorts; public and private aquatic, golf, and/or racquet clubs; health and fitness programming found in corporations, hospitals, private agencies and clubs, and public settings; merchandising; youth, interscholastic, intercollegiate, and professional sports; community recreation; collegiate recreational sports; armed services recreational sports; and nonprofit youth agency recreation and sports programs (Sawyer, 1993). Furthermore, sport management curricula are flexible enough to meet the demands of student career considerations in such areas as sports leisure and recreation, sports and athletics, sporting goods, hostelries and travel, nonprofit agencies, and health and fitness management (Sawyer, 1993). The umbrella of physical education is not broad enough to cover the ever-expanding field of sport management and the other fields that have matured (Sawyer, 1993). Sawyer suggests that the least threatening option is to remain within the department of physical education and seek an autonomous status with a separate budget and curricular freedom. The second option is to seek departmental status, which would require a major financial commitment by the college/university at a time when dollars are short. Yet another option is to merge the sport management curricula into the department of recreation management or recreation and leisure studies, forming a new, expanded department of recreation and sport management. Sawyer felt strongly that sport management undergraduate and graduate programs of the future could easily expand and flourish under the umbrella of recreation and sport management. The future growth and development of sport management programs in the United States and throughout the world is

increasing. Looking towards the future, it is important for sport management programs to gain a better understanding of skill sets and competencies needed to meet the demands of the global sport management workplace.

Method

The participants in this study were drawn from a modified random sample of 137 higher educational institutions in the United States that offer an undergraduate sport management program. These universities were chosen from (1) the Directory of Sport Management Programs (Alsop & Fuller 2000), (2) the NCAA Handbook (2005) list of sport management programs and (3) an internet search. From these sources, the authors compiled a working list of schools (N = 274) by selecting every other school on the list to receive the survey. The internet was used almost exclusively to obtain updated addresses and contacts within the selected schools. The Internet search included the NASSM, NASPE, and EASM websites.

The survey was designed to collect the following data: (1) the program profile (i.e., program name, program location, program size, student-faculty ratio and program approval status), (2) admittance requirements (i.e., grade point average, application, number accepted, year of student to apply, admission decision), (3) faculty profile (i.e., number of faculty, faculty ratio, terminal degree, faculty research interests and scholarly activities), and (4) critical issues in sport management academia. The research protocol was reviewed and approved by the West Virginia University Institutional Review Board. The survey was distributed via mail. A postage-paid return envelope was enclosed in the mailing. The participants were given a two-week period for the completion of the surveys. After the deadline had passed, e-mails were sent to the program

coordinators regarding the survey requesting a response if one had not already been sent. Of the 137 surveys distributed, 53 were returned (38.7%) yielding 50 usable data sets.

Results

Program Profile

Program designation. More than sixty-two percent of sport management programs at the undergraduate level are designated Sport Management. Sports Administration (12%) and Recreation and Sport Management (10%) were found to be the second and the third most common titles used to identify programs (see Table 1). Health and Human Services (28%) housed the majority of sport management programs at the undergraduate level, followed by Education (20%) and Business (16%). Some of the departments and schools included in the “Other” category were Leisure Studies and Physical Education (see Table 1).

Program size. The size of the program varied from six to 450 students enrolled. Over fifty percent of the programs enrolled 100 or fewer students. Student-faculty ratio ranged from 1:1 to 150:1. Nearly 39% of programs reported a student to faculty ratio between 31 and 50 students per faculty member, followed by 36.8% with 1 to 30 students per faculty member (see Table 1). One program had 150 students per faculty member. The female to male student ratio in all the sport management programs ranged from 0.06 to 0.72, with close to 40% of the programs reporting .20 or less, and 81% of programs having a rate equal to or less than 0.40 (see Table 1).

The percentage of ethnic minority students in all the sport management programs ranged from zero to 98%, with more than 81% of the programs reporting 20% or less (see Table 1). Two programs (4.8%) reported no ethnic minority students and two other programs (4.8%) reported an ethnic minority student ratio of more than .91.

Table 1: Program Profile (N=50)

Program Name	N	Percentage
Sport management	31	62
Sports Administration	6	12
Recreation and Sport management	5	10
Other	8	16
Program Location		
Health and Human Services	14	28
Education	10	20
Business	8	16
Other	18	36
Program Size		
50 or less	14	29.8
51 – 100	10	21.3
101 – 150	9	19.1
151 – 200	4	8.5
201 – 250	4	8.5
251 – 300	1	2.1
301 and over	3	10.6
Student to Faculty Ratio		
1-30	18	36.8
31-50	19	38.8
51-100	11	22.4
101 or above	1	2.0
Female Student Ratio		
0.01-0.20	17	39.53
0.21-0.40	18	41.86
0.41-0.60	6	13.95
0.61-.080	2	4.65
Minority Student Ratio		
Zero	2	4.76
0.01-0.10	14	33.33
0.11-0.20	18	42.86
0.21-0.30	4	9.52
0.31-0.40	1	2.38
0.41-0.50	1	2.38
0.91-1.00	2	4.76

Table 2: Faculty Profile (N=50)

No of Faculty	N	Percentage
1	5	10.2
2 – 3	15	30.6
4 – 5	17	34.7
6 – 7	7	14.3
8 – 9	2	4.1
10 or over	3	6.0
No of Adjunct Faculty		
0 - 2	33	70.2
3 - 4	8	17.0
5 - 6	4	8.5
7 - 8	1	2.1
8 – 10	1	2.1
Female Faculty Ratio		
Zero	14	29.17
0.01-0.20	5	10.42
0.21-0.40	13	27.08
0.41-0.60	9	18.75
0.61-.080	5	10.42
0.81-1.00	2	4.17
Non-white Male Faculty Ratio		
Zero	21	46.67
0.01-0.20	6	13.33
0.21-0.40	12	26.67
0.41-0.60	4	8.89
0.61-.080	1	2.22
0.81-1.00	1	2.22
Faculty have Terminal Degree Ratio		
Zero	3	7.69
0.01-0.20	0	0.00
0.21-0.40	7	17.95
0.41-0.60	3	7.69
0.61-.080	7	17.95
0.81-1.00	19	48.72
Grant Received		
\$0 – \$500	22	44.9
\$501 – 1,500	10	20.4
\$1501 – 5,000	6	12.2
\$5,001 – 10,000	2	4.1
10,001 or more	9	18.4

Program approval status. The data suggest that the majority of sport management programs (70%) were not approved by either the NASPE or NASSM. Eighty-six percent of the programs have mandated internships in their curriculum. Faculty and on-site supervisors are the top two personnel to supervise the interns. In addition to offering the undergraduate program, 50% of the participating programs also offered sport management at the graduate level. Professional sport, recreation, and collegiate sport, respectively, were the most reported fields where students obtained work upon graduation.

Program admittance requirements. Program admission standards varied by institution. Specifically, fifty-six percent of the surveyed institutions did not require an application to be completed by the student for entrance into the program. The majority of the programs (91.8%) did not require that letters of recommendation or interviews (85.7%) be submitted for consideration of the admittance application. Grade point average admission standards varied from institution to institution, ranging from no minimum grade point average required (36%) to 3.0 or above (6%) for admittance into the sport management program. The majority of the grade point average admission requirements were between 2.00-2.49 (38%). The majority of programs (76%) had no maximum/cap for the numbers of students enrolled in the sport management program.

Sport-related experience requirements for admittance into the sport management program also varied from program to program. Fifty-seven percent of the surveyed institutions required no sport-related experiences to gain admittance into the sport management program, while forty-three percent required sport-related experience for admittance. Freshmen and sophomores are the most common students to apply or declare as a sport management major. Some programs reported admitting students into the program during the junior and senior years. Sport management

student admission decisions are reported to be made primarily by faculty members, followed by administrators and students.

Faculty Profile

The total number of faculty in the sport management program range from one to twelve. The total number of adjunct faculty members range from zero to ten. Female faculty and ethnic minority faculty are underrepresented groups in the sport management programs. Close to 30% of programs had no female faculty and nearly half (47%) of the programs reported no faculty members who were not white males. Surprisingly, two programs (4.2%) reported 1.00 female faculty ratios, meaning all the faculty members in these two programs are female (see Table 2).

With respect to terminal degrees, three programs (7.7%) did not have any faculty members holding terminal degrees and a quarter of the sport management programs reported that more than forty percent of their faculty members did not have a terminal degree (see Table 2).

Regarding the terminal degree received by the sport management faculty, only 42% of faculty members in the sport management program reported a terminal degree in sport management.

It is important to note that most of the undergraduate sport management faculty members (68.2%) had a strong research interest. The top two conferences for the faculty members to attend are those hosted by the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM) and the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD), respectively. Sport management faculty reported being expected to write, submit and receive grants and contracts to support their research agendas. Data revealed that 44.9% of sport management faculty received \$500 or less in grants and contracts in the past 4 years. On the other hand, more than 18% of sport management programs received \$10,001 or more in grants and contracts in that same period.

Critical Issues Facing Sport Management Programs

When asking sport management faculty to identify critical issues that are currently present in the sport management field, the top four cited issues were: 1) the lack of PhD candidates, 2) salary issues, 3) saturation of undergraduate programs, and 4) few women and ethnic minority faculty. Other important issues mentioned by the respondents were the legitimacy of the sport management program, collaboration with professional franchises, and research publications for faculty.

Discussion

This study provides an overview of sport management programs in the United States. According to Sawyer, (1993) “the vast majority of the sport management programs (undergraduate and graduate) are housed in departments or schools of physical education” (Sawyer, 1993, p.4). Fifteen years later, results show that the majority (28%) of sport management programs are actually housed in Schools of Health and Human Services. The academic home of the program may help to shape the field of study in sport management. For example, programs housed in a School of Business might be expected to require students to take more business-related courses than a program located in the College of Health and Human Services. While there is no clear consensus for the “best” home for sport management programs, Parkhouse (1987) stated, “regardless of the program’s location, sport management requires the cooperation of several disciplines, especially business administration and physical education” (p. 109).

Chalip (2006) writing in “Toward a Distinctive Sport Management Discipline,” made it clear that sport management as an academic discipline is a young discipline, and claimed that the argument over the ‘appropriate’ academic home for sport management is a specious one. He

argues that there are very important contributions sport management brings to the scholarly debate about the intersection of sport and business nationally and at the global level, regardless of where it may be housed in the University. He concluded that what sport management scholars contribute to the discipline is much more important than the argument about where sport management programs are housed.

This manuscript highlights some important data such as student ratios (i.e., student to faculty ratio, female student ratio and minority student ratio), and faculty ratios (i.e., female faculty ratio, and non-white male faculty ratio). It is difficult to maintain high quality programs with a low faculty to student ratio and a high percentage of part-time faculty (Steir, 1991).

Diversity, or rather a lack of diversity within sport management programs remains an area of concern. Female faculty and minority students were underrepresented groups in sport management programs. It is possible that the low number of female faculty may contribute to the low number of female students. Brooks and Althouse (2007) concluded that “current and future sport management standards must not only value diversity in the workplace, but they also need a knowledge base to provide organizational diversity leadership and advocacy within the sport market place” (p. 409). A paucity of women and ethnic minority faculty members is one of the critical issues in sport management programs reported by subjects in this study.

The high percentage of faculty without terminal degrees and the number of part-time faculty members may contribute to the lack of external grant money received by sport management faculty. Currently, and in the foreseeable future, newly hired sport management faculty members will be expected to write and submit grants to support their research efforts.

The research results indicated that seventy percent of the programs had either not chosen to pursue NASPE-NASSM approval, or had not attained approval. It appears that more variability

of sport management course offerings exist in programs outside the U.S. than within the U.S., most likely due to the standardisation required to obtain NASPE-NASSM approval for programs in the United States. Fielding et al. (1991) found many reasons why institutions opposed program approval; loss of flexibility, elitism, implementation costs, and increased program costs. In addition, some sport management programs do not apply for program approval, mainly because the “marketplace will function as an assessment mechanism” (p. 12).

Institutions may also question the need for approval. The business school programs already receive accreditation by AACSB International, education programs are accredited by NCATE, and recreation and leisure studies programs are accredited by NRPA/AAPAR Council on Accreditation. These accreditation agencies are recognised by the Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). On the other hand, the NASPE-NASSM SMPRC is not recognised as an accreditation agency by CHEA. Therefore, the need for approved programs may not be a high priority to institutions, especially when institutions have limited financial and human resources.

Globalisation has become a trend in the business field and the sports industry. International sports events and international sports broadcasting are bringing countries closer together. This interaction and collaboration is forcing sports managers to think global; however, few sport management curricula address this issue. Li, Ammon, and Kanters (2002) stated that “the trend in the globalization of sports has provoked sport management educators around the world to contemplate if sport management curriculum should be internationalized so as to become part of this globalization trend” (p.180). Because of the growth of sport world wide, and the increase revenue produced by multinational sport events such as Wimbledon, World Cup Soccer, and the Olympics, and more recently the NBA, sport is being managed on an intercontinental basis. In

order to manage effectively and efficiently a common body of knowledge must be taught to those who will lead the efforts in directing these world sporting events.

Current and future demand for sport management programs in colleges and universities will continue to remain high. Corporate, recreational, and entertainment sports are attractive markets for graduates of sport management programs. Future researchers many want to investigate the factors contributing to the dearth of diversity amongst sport management faculty, students, and administrators.

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