

Development and Organization of a Student-Operated Sport Management Cocurricular Club: Partners in Sports

Robin Hardin and James Bemiller

University of Tennessee

Joshua Pate

James Madison University

Experiential learning is a critical component to a college education in the area of sport management as students must enter the workforce with hands-on industry experience. One experiential learning tool is a cocurricular club that offers volunteer work experience for sport management majors. The University of Tennessee's Partners in Sports is an example of a sport management cocurricular club that prepares students for working in the sport industry through volunteer experiences. The purpose of this study was to provide a governance and organizational framework of a student-operated sport management cocurricular club and explore how it fits into the Foster Five-Step Experiential Learning Model (Foster & Dollar, 2010). This study examines the governance, student involvement, leadership, opportunities, financials, and yearly activities of Partners in Sports and offers practical applications for each area. The exploration revealed that a cocurricular club fits on the Volunteer Exploration step of the Foster Five-Step Experiential Learning Model as it introduces students to the sport industry by offering experiential learning opportunities. Providing a cocurricular club allows sport management programs to maximize initial industry exposure to students.

Experiential learning is a critical component to a college education in the area of sport management where hands-on experience is difficult to initially obtain yet required for beginning a career. Foster and Dollar (2010) stated that experiential learning is when an individual is "working or volunteering for an organization in order to gain on-the-job experience in their preferred field of work before graduation from an academic program" (p. 10). Experiential learning is a process whereby knowledge is created through a transformational experience while on the job (Kolb, 1984). From this perspective, learning takes place as an individual experiences a behavior as opposed to reading about it in a textbook or listening to a professor's lecture. Therefore, actual hands-on experience complements classroom assignments, and may serve as a greater education tool in some areas of sport management. Experiential learning has shown to be effective in the areas of sport marketing (Miller, Meaney, & Podlog, 2012; Pauline & Pauline 2008), event management (Canberg, 2009; Charlton, 2007), and sport sales (Irwin,

Southall, & Sutton, 2007; McKelvey & Southall, 2008; Pierce, Petersen, & Meadows, 2011).

Foster and Dollar (2010) identified applicable terms for experiential learning, in sequential order from the lowest level of involvement to the highest: volunteerism (no reward provided for work), practicum or apprenticeship (practicing work for academic credit), cooperative education (on-site job training combined with classroom experience), service learning (combining community service with academic study), and graduate assistantship (part-time work for academic credit or job experience). College students are exposed to these levels of involvement through opportunities that count for credits toward a degree, and universities consider those opportunities part of the educational experience (Kelley, Beitel, & DeSensi, 1994; Parilla & Hesser, 1998; Young & Baker, 2004). The Commission on Sport Management Accreditation (COSMA) recognizes the need for these learning experiences and includes internships and linkages to the sport industry as part of the accreditation process (Commission on Sport Management Accreditation, 2010). These requirements for graduation are beneficial because students receive practical, hands-on experience rather than entering the workforce with only a degree in hand and a thin resume. The importance of converting of theoretical classroom knowledge to practical application in the work environment certainly enhances the professional

Hardin and Bemiller are with the Dept. of Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sport Studies, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN. Pate is with the Dept. of Hospitality, Sport, and Recreation Management, James Madison University, VA.

development of sport management students (Cuneen & Parks, 1997; Judge, et al., 2011).

Educators in the University of Tennessee's Department of Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sport Studies recognized and addressed the need for student learning experiences in 1998, under the guidance of Dr. Ralph E. (Buck) Jones, by creating Partners in Sports, a cocurricular club that has developed into a culture of volunteering and professional development among students as they prepare for a career in the sport industry. Students at Tennessee gain practical experience through curriculum such as undergraduate and graduate practicum, internship, event management courses, and experiential learning courses (University of Tennessee Knoxville, n.d.a). It is important to note, however, that not all experiential learning must be awarded college credit. In fact, student leadership and satisfaction increase when experiential learning takes place outside of the classroom and in the community where professional and social skills developed can prepare students for employment (Astin & Sax, 1998; Flannery & Ward, 1999).

Cocurricular clubs exist outside the area of classes that are taken for credit. They are formed around an academic major and can be seen as a training ground for putting into practice skills and concepts learned within the curriculum (Judge, et al., 2011). In fact, it is outside of the classroom where students begin to make links between abstract concepts discussed in the classroom and tangible applications that are carried out in the working environment (Anderson, Swick, & Yff, 2001; Flannery & Ward, 1999). Experiential learning through avenues such as cocurricular clubs has increased student engagement, improved the atmosphere for making ethical decisions that can be applicable in the workplace, and promoted critical-thinking and problem-solving skills (Meaney, Bohler, Kopf, Hernandez, & Scott, 2008). Experiential learning also is the best resume builder for students entering the workforce. Employers rank field experience as the most important element of sport management academic programs (Petersen & Pierce, 2009). Therefore, the establishment of a cocurricular club offers supplemental experiences for students to go above and beyond the academic requirements for career preparation.

Cocurricular clubs may focus on offering multiple experiences for students. One component of experiential learning is service learning, and the two terms are often and inaccurately used interchangeably. Service learning can be viewed as a form of experiential learning; however, there are key differences: (a) service learning places increased importance on learning that is reciprocal and reflective in nature; (b) service learning emphasizes engagement that can affect genuine and long-term social change; and (c) service learning benefits both parties and is not driven by the focus on individual and technical skill development as one would see as part of an internship (Seifer & Connors, 2007). Furco (1996) developed a model that clearly defines the differences between the various service programs. In this model, internships and field education fall on the right side of the continuum

where the intended beneficiary is the student and the emphasis of the service provided is on student learning. At the opposite end of the continuum is volunteerism and community service, where the recipient of the service provided is the primary beneficiary and the emphasis is place on the service itself. The middle of this continuum is where service learning is located. The intention of such programs is to equally benefit both the provider of the service and the recipient while focusing equally on both the service provided and the learning of the student.

Partners in Sports is on the right side of the Furco (1996) continuum with emphasis on student experience and learning. The club hosts one event that serves a local nonprofit organization, but the emphasis remains on student benefits. The premise of the cocurricular club is to give students more meaningful field experiences to be better prepared for the job market. While many universities offer sport management cocurricular clubs, an exploration of Partners in Sports is merited through its large student membership, financial state, and longevity as a cocurricular club with anticipation of offering a blueprint for other student-operated sport management cocurricular clubs to follow.

The purpose of this examination of Partners in Sports was to (a) provide a governance and organizational framework of a sport management cocurricular club, (b) explore how it fits into the Foster Five-Step Experiential Learning Model (Foster & Dollar, 2010), and (c) generate a blueprint for educators to follow in organizing a cocurricular sport management club. The remainder of this paper first addresses the governance and organizational framework and offers a blueprint for educators, then positions Partners in Sports on the Foster Five-Step Experiential Learning Model so educators may know where a similar cocurricular club may fit into the design of their department.

Partners in Sports Governance and Organizational Framework

As of 2012, Partners in Sports had an annual membership average of 160 students, which accounted for more than half of the annual initial fall enrollment within the sport management program at the University of Tennessee. The organization hosted four annual events to give students work experience and foster contacts within the industry. Two events were designed to give students face time with industry leaders and campus athletic department personnel, while two events provided students with opportunities to operate a one-day golf tournament and a one-day football event with a local nonprofit organization. In addition, Partners in Sports worked closely with athletic department initiatives as well as community sport organizations and sponsors, sending students to work at local marathons, golf tournaments, and athletic events.

Resources were provided to students in the form of a computer laboratory made possible by the organization, annual scholarships to students, funding for travel at

events off campus, and office materials such as industry, trade and career publications, resume paper and office supplies. Student involvement in the organization has been referred to within the department as a culture, in that becoming a member of Partners in Sports is expected upon entering the major due to the experiences it provides, thus validating the organization as a target for study. It is important to note that Partners in Sports is a brand within the Department of Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sport Studies at Tennessee but not all opportunities provided by the cocurricular club are afforded to all students. Students who are not members of the club do not get access to certain privileges such as scholarship opportunities, funding for travel, and volunteer opportunities. In addition, the club is open to students beyond those majoring in sport management, so this differentiates it from opportunities and events provided within the department.

Organizational Governance

The mission statement of Partners in Sports as listed in its constitution is “to stimulate and encourage understanding of and participation in goals of the sport management major as well as provide valuable networking opportunities, a chance for students to meet others in their major, and become acquainted with faculty and professional speakers” (Constitution of Partners in Sports at the University of Tennessee, 2009, § B). The student board is comprised of 7–10 undergraduate and graduate sport management majors. The student board is led by a graduate assistant, who is an ex-officio member of the student board. A faculty advisor serves in a mentor role and serves as an ex-officio member of the student board. Membership in the organization is open to all undergraduate and graduate students at the university in good academic standing, although only sport management majors can serve as student board members or receive scholarships. As of 2012, the undergraduate portion of the organization was approximately 75% with graduate students accounting for the other 25% of the student membership. The board though is weighted more toward graduate students as approximately 70% of the student board was comprised of graduate students. The membership dues are \$15 per academic year. Each student receives a member t-shirt and access to the members-only e-mail list which provides information on upcoming events, internship and employment advertisements, and other sport management-related opportunities that not all students in the department receive.

Practical application. Educators starting a cocurricular club should consider offering guidance, but ensure that the student voice is preserved. Establishing a student board that makes decisions on behalf of the organization is one step toward ensuring that the students get the most out of a cocurricular club. Many aspects of the club should be managed by a faculty advisor such as financial management and scholarship distribution to

avoid the pitfalls of year-to-year student turnover. A graduate assistant maintains a leadership voice from the student body and gives students more power within the organization rather than faculty members making decisions. Educators starting a cocurricular club should also consider offering assistance in constructing a constitution and establishing a governance structure (e.g., board members or officers), but should allow the students to have the final say in how the club is run. A final recommendation would be to avoid requirements within the organization. A question many students ask when joining Partners in Sports is about the time commitment. While it may take years to establish a culture of volunteering within the program, mandating that student members participate carries the risk of pressuring them and making participation a burden. Put simply, success stories of members having positive experiences and gaining opportunities may outweigh forced participation.

Student Involvement

Among the goals of Partners in Sports is to give students opportunities to gain experience in real-world environments in the area of sport management before entering the job market. Therefore, Partners in Sports hosts four annual events, partners with local and regional sport event planners to provide volunteer opportunities, and informs its membership of volunteer and job opportunities in the industry. All students within the major are welcome to volunteer for the four annual events, but the local and regional opportunities such as conference championship events and area sport events are made known exclusively to the club’s membership. This exclusivity adds value to the Partners in Sports brand, rewards student involvement with the club, and serves as word-of-mouth marketing to other students.

Practical application. Exclusivity results in students having a compelling interest in becoming members of the sport management cocurricular club in a manner much like Greek fraternity and sorority organizations. Educators seeking to implement a sport management cocurricular club should consider how to reward members with exclusive opportunities such as access to job, practicum, and volunteer contact information. Cocurricular clubs often hold regular meetings, but students simply did not attend open meetings for Partners in Sports. They did, however, volunteer for practical experience at events. Therefore, this organization is an example of how many students may not be attracted to “involvement” in terms of meetings but rather “involvement” through experiential learning at events that can bolster their resumes. The educator seeking to implement a sport management cocurricular club should consider an annual schedule of volunteer and networking events that offer the student resume experience or career opportunities rather than membership meetings that present little to no value for the member.

Student involvement is also important simply to build a professional network. The size of a person's network is a predictor of the ability to learn new information but the quality of people in the network is important as well (Sacks & Graves, 2012). The experiential learning opportunities by Partners in Sports allow students to interact with professionals and not merely have a brief conversation. Some of the meetings are brief but many times students get to work side-by-side with industry professionals. This enables students to focus on building a quality network and not just a large network (Sacks & Graves, 2012).

Leadership

Experiential learning projects that develop professional competencies are a way to boost confidence and help students identify their strengths as professionals (Flanery & Ward, 1999). Students gain the opportunity for leadership roles within Partners in Sports through serving as a graduate assistant, serving on the student board, or becoming project manager of an event. The graduate assistant is much like a president of the organization. The student board members act as trustees to the organization and serve in leadership roles among their peers. In addition, members are selected as project managers for events and tasks to increase personal investment and experience.

Practical application. Cocurricular clubs may be governed in multiple ways, although the organization in this study was designed much like a nonprofit organization with a president (e.g., graduate assistant) and board of trustees (e.g., student board). The educator starting a sport management cocurricular club should consider how different governing roles will benefit the student in terms of leadership qualities. For example, it may seem obvious to create roles of president, president-elect, treasurer, secretary, and a board; however, a challenge faced by any cocurricular club is turnover. Therefore, the educator serving as faculty advisor should consider the costs of the learning curve of teaching new students in new roles for the academic year vs. the benefits of having a multiyear graduate assistant and returning board members that offer consistency from year-to-year while also educating new board members. Based on the Partners in Sports model, a fluid and flexible student board with a mix of returning and new members offers better leadership training (e.g., returning students teach new students) for those active members.

Creating Opportunities

The focus of Partners in Sports is to provide opportunities for students to gain working experience before graduation. While many of those opportunities come through Partners in Sports events, opportunities are often presented through an existing and positive relationship with regional organizations and the Tennessee athletic department. The relationship with the athletic department is reciprocal in nature in that Partners in Sports

members want and need the experience and the athletic department allows students to help manage events and work in other capacities. Outside the realm of Partners in Sports and part of the formal sport management curriculum, students often complete their field study in the athletic department. The 2011–2012 academic year had students enrolled in the sport management field study courses log 57,470 hours with the majority of those in the campus and community areas. The sport management faculty considers the athletic department the laboratory of the program just as chemistry or biology has a laboratory for students to learn. The relationship has grown through the years based on the foundation set forth by Dr. Jones and is certainly mutually beneficial. In addition, assisting in this relationship is the fact that nearly 20 full-time employees of the athletic department are graduates of the Tennessee sport management program, and they have an understanding of the Partners in Sports mission and what the academic program entails. The relationship has developed in that Partners in Sports asks what it can do for the athletic department and has the willingness to do basically any task. That is shown by the members' eagerness to be involved, and their professionalism and outstanding efforts have built a solid foundation of trust and respect from the athletic department.

In addition to the athletic department connections, Partners in Sports creates opportunities for students through access to internship and career website subscriptions and existing relationships within the local and regional sport organizations. Opportunities are regularly distributed to the student membership through an e-mail, Facebook (more than 800 group members), and Twitter (more than 500 followers) networks. Partners in Sports has a LinkedIn groups page and it is used for professional connections through the network. The e-mail distribution and social media networks are used primarily for job announcements and recent career moves of alumni. Partners in Sports also maintains a student-developed website, www.partnersinsports.com, which publishes information regarding the activities of the organization and volunteer and career opportunities. Through the four Partners in Sports events, relationships with the athletic department and other sport organizations, and the e-mail and social media networks, the club aims to keep students informed of opportunities to gain experience and help build a network of connected alumni who may help them in their future.

Practical application. Relationship building, which is especially critical in the sport industry, is another product of experiential learning and educators should aim to establish connections within the university athletic department as well as the surrounding area. Perhaps most important regarding the relationship building trait of experiential learning is that students be put in position to develop contacts in the sport industry that may assist in advancing their careers, where the experiential learning organization can lead to a greater overall educational experience through practical work (Foster & Dollar, 2010; Hajart, Toscano, Horsley, & Del Re, 2007;

Rascher, 2005). These relationships can be reciprocal in nature—and advertised as such—in that the students gain connections and experience in the industry while the athletic department and surrounding sport organizations gain access to a volunteer pool. Educators must also remain mindful of advertising the advantages of these opportunities to students. While it may seem obvious that working an all-day golf tournament is quality resume experience, some students may not yet realize the value or be cognizant to put that experience as an item on his or her resume.

Financials

Partners in Sports student membership fees cover the basic expense of shirts and costs for the initial membership meeting. Annual support is provided through donations from businesses within the community. Partnering with these organizations was a natural outgrowth of the interaction of students through work and internship opportunities on campus and throughout the community. These corporate sponsors have provided opportunities for students to gain valuable work experience and have led to sponsorship opportunities for the organization.

Funds are only used in a manner that will benefit students in concordance with the organization's mission statement to better prepare students to excel in the highly competitive sport industry upon graduation. Students have been provided travel support to attend professional meetings, job fairs, and work at the Southeastern Conference events and the NFL's Super Bowl. Funds are also used to host professional speakers on campus and purchase career development material. Group subscriptions are provided to websites for job and internship searches. Materials and supplies are also provided for preparing resumes and reports. Scholarships were awarded for the first time in 1999, and the Partners in Sports Scholarship Endowment Fund was created in 2000. The endowment fund grew in excess of \$250,000 in its first 10 years, and Partners in Sports awarded nearly \$15,000 in scholarships in the spring of 2012.

Practical application. The finances of a cocurricular club may be of concern to educators, but Partners in Sports is an example of how finances can grow steadily over time by fostering relationships and knowing limitations. The organization waited two years before establishing a scholarship endowment, and the first awards were two for \$250 apiece compared with 2012 when the club distributed seven scholarships and six awards totaling \$15,000. Educators should be mindful that supporting the club and the students financially will be a slow process without corporate support. It would be ideal to seek initial corporate financial backing with an athletic department connection (e.g., athletic apparel company, communications company, etc.) to assist in bridging the gap between academia and athletics as well as ensuring longevity in the support. The Partners in Sports example reveals two essentials: (1) events alone will not financially support the club, and (2) money made is best spent on

the students through scholarships or providing resources. Therefore, securing corporate sponsors to provide financial support as well as gifts in-kind for auction or to give to students creates relationships with multiple avenues that allow for leverage for apparel, gifts, or potentially career opportunities for students.

Yearly Activities

Regular membership meetings for Partners in Sports evolved into a yearly calendar that features a major event each quarter and other events at which students gain a mix of volunteer and networking experience (see Table 1). The fall semester is highlighted by the Partners in Sports Fall Conference, a professional conference at which top executives from the sport industry share their expertise and advice with club members as well as attendees from neighboring universities. Members plan and host a service learning Football Skills Competition for the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Tennessee Valley in the spring that allows the children to interact with sport management students and Tennessee student-athletes for a day of exercise, fun, and the opportunity to visit campus. Also in the spring, students plan and host the Partners in Sports Spring Reception, which features a guest speaker from the sport management profession and scholarship and award recipients are announced. In the summer, the organization hosts the Partners in Sports Scholarship Golf Tournament, which raises money for the scholarship endowment and creates an opportunity for students to manage an event that includes roles in (a) registration, (b) food service, (c) silent auction, (d) on-course operations, and (e) awards.

Interspersed around these major events, Partners in Sports organized other opportunities for students to gain practical experiences in sport management. Examples include partnering with IMG College/Vol Network at Tennessee home football games to distribute game programs, staffing a PGA/web.com Tour event in Knoxville, working at Southeastern Conference championships and media days, and forming a Women's Roundtable that allows female members to enjoy dinner and interact with female leaders in the sport industry. In the past, Partners in Sports students have organized other projects such as managing a concession stand at Neyland Stadium, volunteering at local road races and marathons, and working with the AAU at regional and national events.

Practical application. Events are essential for a sport management cocurricular club, and it is vital that the club membership understand the advantages of participation. In the Partners in Sports example, events are planned and advertised to allow students to gain experience for their resumes and establish connections within the sport industry. Networking is emphasized at the Fall Conference, Spring Reception, and Women's Roundtable, whereas practical experience is emphasized at events such as the Football Skills Competition and the Golf Tournament. Educators should be realistic and cautious with regard to what activities are planned and what external activities with which the club may partner

Table 1 Partners in Sports Year of Events

Event	Month	Impact
web.com Tour Golf Tournament	August	Volunteer
Playbook Distribution	August-November	Volunteer
SEC Basketball Media Days	October	Volunteer
Fall Conference	October	Network
Super Bowl	February	Volunteer/Network
Punt, Pass, and Kick	February	Volunteer
Women's Roundtable	February-March	Network
SEC Men's Basketball Tournament	March	Volunteer
SEC Women's Basketball Tournament	March	Volunteer
Knoxville Marathon	April	Volunteer
Sea Ray Relays	April	Volunteer
Spring Reception	April	Network
SEC Softball Tournament	May	Volunteer
SEC Baseball Tournament	May	Volunteer
Rev3 Triathlon	May	Volunteer
Phillip Fulmer Golf Classic	May	Volunteer
Partners in Sports Golf Tournament	June	Volunteer
SEC Football Media Days	July	Volunteer

with regard to its own reputation. It is better to operate few events extremely well than to operate several average events, and the student membership will recognize that disparity. Using the Partners in Sports example, the club decided against adding more annual major events in favor of increasing the quality of the existing events and slowly adding smaller events through better resources, more creative planning, and stronger branding at the events (e.g., new signage, greater student leadership, and emphasis on details). Equally important is for the club to evaluate its participation in external events and relationships with corporate sponsors. Partners in Sports, for example, has declined sponsorship from organizations that do not enhance the brand of the organization. Educators serving in an advising capacity for cocurricular clubs must ensure these considerations and others are evaluated continually by the club's membership and student leadership. Put simply, knowing the club's limitations and remaining consistent with its branding and focus will assist in planning quality events and potentially expanding an annual schedule of events.

Partners in Sports expanded its regular event schedule in 2012 with the establishment of a Women's Roundtable to expose small groups of female membership to female leaders in the sport industry. The club held its soft launch of the event by inviting only a select group of female members to dinner with a campus athletic department employee. A second event was held with a national sports media personality with the same select group of females invited. The events were purposely designed to be small and invite only a select group of female members who had routinely participated in the club's activities. The

invitation was considered as a reward by the students, but also ensured that proper feedback would be given and to gauge the potential success of maintaining the event if the entire female membership was informed. Entering the 2012–13 fiscal year, the club planned to proceed with the Women's Roundtable by keeping the number of invitees small but expanding its reach to other female members. This example provides a blueprint for other sport management cocurricular clubs to follow when establishing events to (a) cautiously evaluate the potential success, (b) obtain feedback from a trusted group of students, (c) reward the best students, and (d) inadvertently create buzz about the event among students who did not attend but eventually knew of the event.

Areas of governance, student involvement, leadership, opportunities, financials, and activities were addressed in this section to offer examples of how Partners in Sports is run and a potential blueprint for other cocurricular clubs in sport management. The question then turns to: How will this benefit the student in the education process? The Foster Five-Step Experiential Learning Model offers a method of evaluation.

Foster Five-Step Experiential Learning Model

The Foster Five-Step Experiential Learning Model was developed to increase student involvement in the classroom through major clubs, supervised learning experiences in sport, and volunteering (Foster & Dollar, 2010). The five steps are: Volunteer Exploration, Apprenticeship,

Classroom, Elective, and Required Culminating Internship. The model's goal is to encourage students to "gain experience in the sport industry before applying for the first full-time position" and the model progresses the student's experience in an upward and forward direction (pp. 12–13). In other words, the further along the model the student progresses, the greater the student's experience.

This study aimed to explore Partners in Sports from a governance and organizational standpoint, to determine its place in the Foster Five-Step Experiential Learning Model, and to offer educators a blueprint for establishing a similar club. With regard to the role of Partners in Sports in experiential learning, the cocurricular club falls under Volunteer Exploration in the Foster Five-Step Experiential Learning Model. Volunteer Exploration is the first step for students in gaining experience with the purpose being to "introduce the student to the industry as soon as possible" through membership in the cocurricular club (Foster & Dollar, 2010, p. 14). Partners in Sports often presents student members their first exposure to working in sport settings. As previously mentioned, the club is comprised primarily of undergraduate students who do not have graduate assistantships or work experience in sport. Therefore, the club's events present initial resume experience for the students and expose them to the entry-level jobs in the industry that require basic customer service skills, hands-on work, long hours, and low pay. The club's founder, Dr. Jones, taught students to do the little things better than anybody. Foster and Dollar (2010) argue that learning the industry on this basic level will produce a better manager due to knowledge of the foundations of the industry (e.g., usher work, concession stand work, customer service). Therefore, a cocurricular club offers those initial experiences for sport management students, which places clubs on the Volunteer Exploration step where they can strive to offer multiple opportunities to students that allow them to explore their own niche in the industry.

Limitations

This evaluation of a sport management cocurricular club is limited with bias and methodology. The researchers were directly involved in leading Partners in Sports at the University of Tennessee at the time of this study as faculty advisor, graduate assistant, and faculty support. These preexisting relationships surely resulted in bias in the examination and reporting of Partners in Sports, although the nature of the relationship between the researchers and the organization also allowed for greater access to information.

Methodologically, polling multiple universities that have experiential learning cocurricular clubs in sport management may be able to better generalize to a greater population, but that does not have to be among the most important goals of studying one case due to the potential for overlooking complex and unique qualities (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1994). The focus of this work was examining

one club deemed successful by its university, college, and department as well as alumni members.

With regard to location, this study examined a program operating at a large university in the Southeastern United States in a city with a population less than 200,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009) where sport, particularly at the college level, is of great importance (Bain-Selbo, 2009). Therefore, this case may not hold qualities that may be applicable at universities of different sizes, in cities of different population levels, or at universities in different regions. Educators should be cautious about the potential differences in markets before applying these suggestions to their own programs.

Future Research

Future research is needed in examining cocurricular clubs in sport management higher education settings. Qualitative research should examine the makeup of cocurricular clubs in sport management programs, looking at the demographics of students who comprise the clubs, which could also be applied outside of the sport management realm. In addition, exploring why students join these clubs and what learned qualities result in greater professional qualifications as they move forward in their careers can benefit the clubs as they seek to solicit student membership as well as refine what activities the organization will offer to its members. Quantitative work should be done to offer a profile of the typical sport management cocurricular club for greater generalization by university size and region.

Conclusion

Experiential learning through cocurricular clubs is essential in sport management because students are able to build their resumes with quality hands-on opportunities while also experiencing the importance of collaboration and partnering with athletic administration and community and corporate leaders. The importance of such opportunities may not be realized by undergraduate and first-year graduate students without a cocurricular club that promotes involvement. A sport management cocurricular club fits on the Volunteer Exploration step of the Foster Five-Step Experiential Learning Model because it introduces students to the sport industry by offering initial volunteer experiences. Events such as distributing game-day programs at football games, staffing a local road race, or networking with classmates and industry professionals at a conference all are critical components to learning what it is like to work in sport. As Foster and Dollar (2010) argued, entry-level volunteer experiences better prepare students to become quality managers because they grow into upper-level roles while maintaining a pulse on the entry-level positions.

Sport management programs without cocurricular clubs are failing to capitalize on one of the biggest needs

of athletic departments, local sport organizations, and regional event planners: volunteers. Simply hosting a club that connects students with these departments and organizations can be an advantage for students because it exposes them to opportunities and expectations within the industry. Anything beyond that such as working events, planning events, or hosting industry leaders on campus is an added bonus for the student.

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