College Student Perceptions of Professional Development Through Sport Management Club Participation

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Traditionally, college students engaged in learning within the classroom setting. College students can also learn in extracurricular activities such as internships and student clubs (Brown & Johnson, 2018). While research in the field of sport management has focused on the role of internships in professional development (e.g. Hayes & Mudrick, 2018; Young & Baker, 2004), less research has focused on the role of sport management clubs and how club participation may enhance a club member's professional development. The purpose of this study was to examine sport management student perceptions of the role that sport management clubs play in their professional development.

A survey about sport management club involvement was sent to sport management majors via Survey Monkey. In order to maximize return rate, surveys were emailed twice, with three weeks separating the distributions. A total of 124 usable surveys were returned (31.34% women, 67.16% men, and 1.49% preferred not to answer). The participants were members or nonmembers of sport management clubs at Division I, II, and III schools. The survey consisted of 21 questions including demographics, Likert scale questions, and open-ended follow up questions. The questions explored why students joined the club and then how they used it, as well as what benefits, skills and/or knowledge they believed they gained from their participation.

The primary reason that students identified as their reason to join the club (benefits sought) was to learn more about internship and job opportunities (60.32% “very much”), followed closely by networking with industry professionals (53.97%) and sport management faculty (47.62%). In terms of benefits actually gained, students most “somewhat” and “strongly” gained in resume-building (40.74%), building interpersonal skills (40%), and also learning more about internship and job opportunities (43.63%). In terms of skills or knowledge, students felt that they “somewhat” or “highly” developed skills such as oral communication (43%), event planning (33.33%), leadership (35.3%) fundraising (31.37%), and especially networking skills (49%). Of those who attended club meetings, they typically attended 1-2 per semester, and yet 71% reported not attending any club-related non-meeting events. Those who attended events were asked what types of events they attended, and across all three schools, the most common answer was a sporting event with a networking-with-executives piece, including NBA and minor-league baseball games. Also, oft-cited were NFL team-sponsored professional development conferences.

This poster will present full results across the aforementioned categories, as well as analyze and discuss other questions including leadership roles within the club as well as reasons and barriers preventing sport management club participation, with an eye toward contributing to the scant research in this field and recommending best practices.