Sport Management Student Club Participation: An Exploratory Study

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Sport management student clubs offer a wide range of opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities that augment the traditional sport management classroom. For this presentation, we examine the relationship between student involvement in a sport management student club, and the benefits from their participation through the lens of Astin’s I-E-O model. Astin’s Theory of Involvement and associated Input-Environment-Outcome (I-E-O) Model (Astin, 1984, 1991), has been used widely to guide research that explores the influence of the college experience on student outcomes.

The study used an exploratory case study methodology, similar to EuBank and DeVita (2015), which allowed the researchers to explore the phenomena of extracurricular involvement through participants in a sport management student club (Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 1998). The case study technique allowed the researchers to purposefully focus this exploratory study on sport management club participants at a single institution, and to use interviews as the primary form of data collection (Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 1998). The use of criterion sampling to select participants also aligned with a case study methodology (Creswell, 2008), and Astin’s I-E-O Model is appropriate in qualitative research methodologies.

All participants were recruited from a large, regional public institution in the southeastern U.S. Two criteria were used to identify participants: (1) students majoring in sport management; and (2) current or past members of the sport management student club. Based on the criteria used, 20 students were identified as potential participants who could articulate their thoughts and experiences to enhance the researcher’s understanding of student club participation, of those 20 contacted, 13 agreed to participate and all 13 completed the study.

The participants in this study revealed characteristics of Astin’s I-E-O Model. First, Inputs (I), specifically, the participants noted that the student club served as a surrogate family or home away from home. The club provided them the opportunity to make new friends and strengthen current friendships, while also connecting with current faculty outside of the classroom. The relationships and connections served as the primary support for students and their continuing interest in sport management as a field of study and potential career. Second, Environment (E), the informal student club environment gave students the opportunity to network and make connections outside of the traditional institutional, as well as engage in their preferred activity of being around like-minded sport individuals within an informal student club setting. Third, participants sense of belonging and relatedness fall under Astin’s Output (O) component.

Findings from this study support Astin’s I-E-O Model, results revealed that participation within a sport management club contributed to students’ engagement, which in turn provided opportunities for personal and professional growth throughout their college experience. The aim of higher education is to offer learning opportunities for students through extracurricular activities that provide a sense of belonging and a connection to the university and academic department, which these results support. The goal of this presentation is to provide sport management faculty, staff, and students with the knowledge and information needed to enhance the traditional sport management classroom through extracurricular activities.