THE CAREER OUTLOOK FOR SPORT MANAGEMENT PROFESSORS

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The academic discipline of sport management has experienced considerable growth during the past 25 years. The growth of the number of programs in the United States from less than 20 in 1980 to more than 200 today has led to a commensurate increase in available faculty positions in sport management (Danylchuk & Boucher, 2003). Unlike traditional academic fields such as biology, history, English, or business, few sport management faculty have received post-graduate training specifically in sport management. Most have either been practitioners in the field or received doctorates in related fields such as kinesiology, physical education, or human performance.

The introduction of doctoral programs in sport management has begun to slowly change this trend. A person interested in securing a position as a sport management professor today has opportunities to earn a PhD in sport management and follow the traditional path of doctoral study, research, and teaching just like college faculty in other disciplines. Unfortunately for institutions of higher learning, the demand for sport management faculty currently far outstrips the supply, as there are roughly five job openings for each doctoral graduate (Mahony, Mondello, Hums & Judd, 2004). But what’s unfortunate for universities is good news for doctoral candidates in sport management, since they will be in demand after they receive their degree.

This paper has three purposes. First, it will examine the state of doctoral programs in the sport management field and discuss the implications on those looking to make a career as a sport
management professor. Second, it will examine the disequilibrium between the demand for qualified sport management faculty and the supply of new PhD’s expected to fill those positions. Finally, it will investigate the issues that this shortage has created for sport management programs and strategies that are being employed to deal with the problem.

**Doctoral programs in sport management**

In traditional academic disciplines it is expected that university faculty will have a doctoral degree in their discipline before they are considered for a full-time, tenure-track position. In some of the para-professional disciplines (communication arts, criminal justice, sport management, etc.) an alternate prerequisite can be extensive professional experience along with at least a Master’s degree in a related discipline. While many current sport management faculty have been part of the latter group, more and more institutions are requiring a PhD in sport management as a requirement for employment consideration. So while some faculty are still recruited without a PhD, we will assume that anyone serious about becoming a sport management professor will first peruse a doctoral degree in sport management.

As of Mach 7, 2007, there are a total of 30 institutions offering doctoral programs in sport management – 17 in the United States and 13 overseas (Table 1). Of these, only three (University of Massachusetts, University of New Mexico, and University of Texas) are accredited by the Sport Management Program Review Council.
Like doctoral programs in any discipline, admission requirements vary a great deal. The University of Massachusetts, which began the first PhD program in sport management in 1971, is rather selective. Their website indicates that “in recent years, the average undergraduate GPA of admitted students has been over 3.5, and the average GMAT score has been over 650. As well, in recent years, about 40% of students entering the program possess MBAs” (University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 2007, ¶9). At Northcentral University, admission is more or less open, given that, “You may apply for admission to a doctoral degree program if you have at least a bachelor's degree or equivalent from an accredited or approved institution . . . You do NOT need to take the GMAT, GRE, or other entrance examinations” (Northcentral University, 2007, ¶1).

The focus of each doctoral program also varies. The doctoral programs at University of Massachusetts and Northcentral University are housed in their respective schools of business, so the coursework is heavily weighted towards traditional managerial subjects such as law, finance, economics, marketing, and so forth. At the University of Louisville, the degree is a “PhD in Educational Administration/Educational Leadership & Organizational Development with a specialty in Sport Administration” (University of Louisville, 2007).¹ Predictably, there is coursework in secondary or postsecondary education, learning styles, organizational leadership in education, and legal issues in education. At Texas Woman’s University, the sport

¹ One wonders if that will all fit on a graduate’s sheepskin.
management program in housed in the Department of Kinesiology, and coursework there may include courses in exercise physiology, cardiovascular exercise, and stress testing (Texas Woman’s University, 2007).

A full-time student can expect to complete their doctoral studies in anywhere from three and five years. The actual amount of time will depend on the number of credits required for candidacy, the number of other graduate credits applied toward the student’s degree, and the length of time it takes to complete the dissertation. Once the degree is completed, the graduate can begin looking for a job.

Obtaining a position as a sport management professor

Sport management is a popular and fast-growing major in American universities at both the undergraduate and master’s levels, which has led to a sharp increase in the demand for qualified faculty. At the same time, it is also obvious that the number of doctoral degrees awarded in sport management falls far short of new openings created each year. This increased demand for faculty in the face of short supply has created a severe shortage of sport management faculty. Weese (2002, p. 10) noted that “Doctoral students coming out of our PhD programs today and in the next few years should feel positive about the opportunities that await them in their academic careers.”
In 1980 there were fewer than 20 undergraduate sport management programs in the United States, and by 1988 there were still only 95 (Danylchuk & Boucher, 2003). Just two years ago, Humphreys (2005) counted 151 programs, and today the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM) web site lists 171 programs. This implies that in just the past two years, 20 institutions have begun degree programs in sport management.

The news is even better when the number of degrees awarded is examined. Humphreys (2005) reports that the number of undergraduate and masters degrees awarded in sport management has increased dramatically in the past 15 years. Using data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education System (IPEDS) at the U. S. Department of Education, he found that there were 669 bachelors degrees granted in 1992, 1516 in 1997, and 2851 in 2002. For the period 1992-2002, this translates into a 16% annual growth rate – compared to a rate of 6% for all bachelors degrees – meaning that enrollment in sport management is growing at a very fast rate.

Mahony et al. (2004) examined the problem of the disequilibrium between the demand for sport management faculty and the supply. They report that for the five-year period from 1997 through 2001, there was an average of 75 full-time sport management job openings per

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2 The literature often contains variations in the number of sport management programs that exist. The IPEDS shows 216 universities granted bachelor’s degrees in sport management during 2002, but “these institutions probably awarded sport management degrees as part of an ‘independent studies’ or ‘interdisciplinary studies’ program and probably do not have a sport management department” (Humphreys, 2005, p. 7).
year. At the same time, doctoral programs produced only 15 graduates per year – only 20% of the total necessary:

The results provide strong support . . . for the suggestion that there is a considerable gap between the number of faculty positions available and the number of doctoral graduates being produced for these positions. The number of open positions grew to over 100 in 2000-2001, whereas the number of sport management doctoral graduates available for these positions was probably less than 26. There are clearly not enough sport management doctoral graduates to fill these open faculty positions. Again, this is much different than most other fields of academia in which the number of doctoral graduates seeking faculty positions well exceeds the number of openings (Mahony et al., 2004, p. 102).

Given the shortage of PhD’s in sport management, graduates should not find it difficult to obtain employment in the field. Unfortunately, this shortage has led to concerns about the ability of sport management departments to service growing undergraduate and graduate student bodies.

Current issues facing sport management departments and faculty

Given growing enrollment and a shortage of new PhD faculty, sport management programs have had to find creative ways to get courses staffed with qualified instructors. There are two distinct issues that need to be addressed: The short-term problem of not having enough
qualified faculty to teach this year’s sections, and the long-term problem of not having enough interested students pursuing PhD’s in sport management.

In the short run, some of the solutions for under-staffing are the same as would be used by any department chair in any discipline. First, faculty can be recruited from other universities. This certainly is helpful for the hiring institution but does not benefit the field as a whole since it simply has created another opening that must be filled (Weese, 2002, Pedersen & Schneider, 2003). Second, adjunct faculty or graduate teaching assistants can teach courses. This is not a desirable option for a number of reasons: Part-time instructors usually have little time to prepare for classes; they are not as available as full-time faculty for out-of-class meetings and discussions, and they are not generally active researchers in the field of sport management (Mahony et al., 2004). Third, faculty members can be hired away from other related fields. Unfortunately, in an industry which values specialization, this can be construed as additional evidence that sport management is not a unique academic discipline (Chalip, 2006). Finally, current faculty may be asked to teach more sections with more students. Problems with large classes are well-known to all instructors and one would think that this solution would be used only as a last resort.

The long-run problem of not having enough PhD graduates is far more difficult to diagnose and to solve. Chalip (2006) argues that it is rooted in the idea that sport management is not a well-defined field of study, still young and finding its way:
This concern is exacerbated by the relatively lower status academic institutions accord to the study of popular culture, particularly sport. This concern is manifested two significant ways. The first is the higher credibility that is often accorded to the so-called home disciplines among ourselves and our colleagues. At some of our institutions, it is deemed insufficient for sport management scholars to have published only in sport management journals . . . this is tantamount to treating sport management as merely a derivative discipline . . . The second manifestation of our fields status insecurity is the perennial discussion over whether the appropriate home for sport management should be a business school or a department specializing in sport studies (e.g., kinesiology).

In fact, the kinds of malaise we have experienced regarding our status, our work, and our place in academic institutions is typical of young disciplines. A century ago, medicine, business, and public administration were each concerned about their poor academic status, their seemingly derivative paradigms, and their appropriate place in tertiary education. The malaise in our field is neither a flaw nor a drawback; it is a necessary process for our maturation (Chalip, 2006, p. 2).

Mahony, Mondello, Hums & Judd (2004) identify several issues which universities and sport management departments should keep in mind when recruiting new faculty. Their survey found that the most important that faculty consider in whether or not to accept a position are, in
descending order, (a) compensation, (b) department culture, (c) the university and the
department’s reputation, (d) work setting\(^3\), (e) their impression of the recruiter, (f) the location of
the institution, and (g) leadership opportunities. Obviously, the location of the university and its
overall reputation is out of the department’s control, as often is the compensation that they can
offer to their faculty. Leadership opportunities will depend on the status of the current program
director and chair, but the other issues are things that departments can change for the better to
make their school more desirable to faculty. Simply picking the departments’ best, brightest, or
most well-known scholar to conduct interviews can make the institution more desirable to
recruits.

Accreditation is also a new challenge for sport management departments now and into
the future. Approximately 25% of all undergraduate sport management programs are accredited
by the SMPRC, and the percentage is rising each and every year (North American Society for
Sport Management, 2007). The accreditation process requires programs to meet 12 standards –
11 of which concern curricular issues. The 12th standard requires programs to establish “a
critical mass of faculty to enhance the depth and breadth required for the development of a
3). Achieving this critical mass demands that a program employ at least two faculty members,
one with a terminal degree and “relevant scholarly preparation” in sport management. This

\(^3\) Defined as “computer and technology money, quality of classrooms, and quality of office.”
means that departments that want to achieve accredited status will have to make a pointed effort to recruit and ultimately hire faculty members with both a doctorate and the desire to do constructive research.

Summary

The days of sport management faculty having PhD’s in physical education or kinesiology are pretty much over. Modern sport management departments desire new faculty who have doctorates in sport management and an interest in both teaching and research. This shift bodes well for anyone interested in a career as a sport management professor. If one is willing to earn a doctorate in sport management from one of the 30 universities around the world that offer them, job opportunities currently far outstrip the supply of qualified applicants to fill them.

This shortage of qualified faculty has created new challenges for sport management departments, while at the same time has created opportunities for sport management to move forward and become a more distinctive an respected field of study. Costa (2005, p. 131) concluded that “the field of sport management has made great strides despite its youth as a field. . . stronger research, additional cross-disciplinary research, a stronger link between theory and practice, enhanced infrastructure, and improved doctoral training are objectives toward which the field should strive.”
All and all it is a great time to be considering a career as a sport management professor. Doctoral programs are looking for good students, and sport management departments are looking for good professors with PhD’s in sport management. Increases in the percentage of programs which are accredited by the SMPRC and the number of faculty with terminal degrees in sport management will go a long way to enhancing the reputation of the discipline.
Table 1

*Doctoral programs in sport management*

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<th>University</th>
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References


