

October 2022

Building a Sports Marketing Program in a College or School of Business

Nathan Kirkpatrick

Samford University- The Brock School of Business, wkirkpat@samford.edu

Matthew Mazzei Ph.D

Samford University, mmazzei@samford.edu

Darin White

Samford University, darin.white@samford.edu

C. Clifton Eason

Samford University, ceason@samford.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/ijbe>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kirkpatrick, Nathan; Mazzei, Matthew Ph.D; White, Darin; and Eason, C. Clifton (2022) "Building a Sports Marketing Program in a College or School of Business," *International Journal for Business Education: Vol. 163: No. 1, Article 4.*

Available at: <https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/ijbe/vol163/iss1/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ISU ReD: Research and eData. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Journal for Business Education by an authorized editor of ISU ReD: Research and eData. For more information, please contact ISUREd@ilstu.edu.

Building a Sports Marketing Program in a College or School of Business

Nathan Kirkpatrick, Ph.D.
Department of Entrepreneurship, Management, and Marketing
Brock School of Business
Samford University

Matt Mazzei, Ph.D.
Department of Entrepreneurship, Management, and Marketing
Brock School of Business
Samford University

Darin White, Ph.D.
Department of Entrepreneurship, Management, and Marketing
Brock School of Business
Samford University

Clif Eason, Ph.D.
Department of Entrepreneurship, Management, and Marketing
Brock School of Business
Samford University

Corresponding Author: Nathan Kirkpatrick, wkirkpat@samford.edu

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to serve as one roadmap for helping marketing and business faculty understand better how to build a Sports Marketing program within a college or school of business. Specifically, this paper lays out specific coursework that can comprise a robust and industry-relevant sports marketing program and provides connected sports business and sports analytics classes and content that can undergird and support a new or growing sports marketing program. This business education development solves a curriculum problem related often to the need for new, innovative, and industry-relevant business curriculum and new occupational pathways for business students. Finally, this paper lays out a blueprint for intentional collegiality and partnership amongst marketing and business faculty, alumni, advisory board members, and industry partners in helping a newly created sports marketing program not only grow, but be connected to strong industry internships, job placements, and newly related occupational pathways for business students.

Keywords

AACSB, Business Education, Curriculum, Program-Building, Sports Marketing



In the Fall of 2009, a small, private university in the southeastern part of the United States of America and its faculty were looking for a pathway to create a new marketing course that would interest students and provide opportunities for growth for the Entrepreneurship, Management, and Marketing Department and their school of business (AACSB accredited business school), as well as solve the problem for more relevant, real-time business education that interests students (for relevant job learning, placement, and even entrepreneurial endeavors) and adds value to a dynamic domestic and international business world (Blass, 2018; Liesz & Porter, 2015).

There was a need for new and innovative curriculum that engaged students' interests, provided new occupational pathways, and showed great relevance to an ever-growing sport business landscape in America (currently a roughly \$80 billion dollar business industry domestically) (Statista, 2022). This need is also seen often in many colleges and schools of business in that new business classes (whether sports marketing based or related to other areas of new business education such as analytics and big data) and programs are needed on a continual basis to better adapt and link to the changing landscapes of domestic and international business and the job prospects these landscapes provide for students as they pursue business degrees (Seifried, Agyemang, & Walker, 2021). The need for continual new business (and sports business) classes and programs also helps students learn, grow in, and connect deeper to needed KSA's (knowledge, skills, and abilities) required by employers in a dynamic marketplace both in business and in sport business (Maldonado, 2018; Qasim & Kharbat, 2020; Seifried, Agyemang, & Walker, 2021). Thus, the idea for a new "Sports Marketing" undergraduate course was floated in that the marketing and business sides of sports interested students and would be new content and curriculum for the school, which helped solve a need (one that still is present) for dynamic and fresh business curriculum that prepares students with a business education that is current and real-time in both its content and professional preparation.

The course was created by one of the newer faculty (who now has since gone on to lead the Sports Marketing Concentration for ten-plus years) in the school, and first offered as a "Jan-Term" class in the winter of 2010. Jan-Term at this specific university and in their school of business normally attracted ten to twelve students (or less) for a class, but this new "Sports Marketing" class had twenty-three students registered. Students were excited about the new course that delved into the ever-changing business and marketing sides of the sport industry, and administrators were pleasantly surprised with the strong Jan-Term registration numbers. What no one knew at the time was that this one class would go on to spawn an entire Sports Marketing Concentration within their school of business, a Center for Sports Analytics, partnerships with sports franchises such as the Atlanta Braves (Major League Baseball), Miami Dolphins (National Football League), Birmingham Legion (minor league soccer), Birmingham Squadron (NBA G-League Affiliate), Coca-Cola Sports Marketing (to name a few), and even a strong annual collaboration between the athletic department and its teams at the university. In short, this one newly created class in the Fall of 2009 and winter of 2010 started an entire movement within their school of business that providentially placed sports marketing and sports business as (one of many) pillars of education, student engagement, and career opportunity within the school and for its students.

The keys to success in building the Sports Marketing Concentration, the Center for Sports Analytics, and its strategic corporate and university partnerships was rooted in four main areas of intention and emphasis: Collaboration, Humility, A Student-Centered Approach, and Industry Involvement and Feedback (Le Meunier-Fitzhugh & Piercy, 2007; Le Meunier-Fitzhugh & Piercy, 2010; Madhavaram, & Laverie, 2010). The purpose of this paper is to serve as an innovative roadmap (one of many possible ways) for helping colleges and schools of business (particularly, although not exclusively for AACSB colleges and schools of business) create, grow, and support innovative sports marketing programs, and thus solve a need for continued, dynamic business curriculum that attracts students and connects with dynamic business trends and occupational pathways (Abernethy & Padgett, 2011; Kelley, Tong, & Joon-Choi, 2010). Specifically, sports marketing programs that foster student engagement, teach high-level sports industry content and skills, and are rooted in partnership and industry involvement that undergirds all curriculum, student opportunities, and even the job search process for graduates, and the objective of this paper is to show how a college or school of business can build a Sports Marketing program that encapsulates all of these critical components and endeavors (Choi, Tong, & Kelley, 2010; Granitz & Koernig, 2011; Pefanis-Schlee & Harich, 2010).

Review of Literature

In terms of marketing courses and programs that prepare students well for the working world, the literature has shown that student to teacher, student to student, and technology-based/problem-based educational experiences in business have had the most success at preparing students for vocational opportunities (Bartholomew, Newman, & Newman, 2020; Smith & Gibson, 2016). The Sports Marketing Concentration at this small, private southeastern university in the United States of America has sought to incorporate all parts of these educational experiences in that there are traditional lecture-based classes (such as “Sports Marketing” and “Advanced Sports Marketing”) where the professor is leading the student in learning. In addition, there are student to student research groups and student-work focused classes (such as “Marketing Research”) where students are learning with and from each other (guided by a professor or professors) as they tackle sports industry and analytic-based research and consulting projects, and even technology-based educational experiences in the same “Marketing Research” class where students use and draw upon their knowledge and background of certain statistical software packages for data analysis and presentation (Brown-McCabe & Meuter, 2011). These types of industry consulting and analytic-based research projects are grounded in the theoretical foundation of project-based learning and research where students are working closely with each other, their professors, and sport business clients (such as professional or college sport teams, sport businesses, third-party companies, etc.) in order to solve sport business problems and needs while adding value through industry-focused research and presentation practice (Smith & Gibson, 2016). Thus, this Sports Marketing Concentration is rooted in a variety of educational experiences, curriculum emphases, and the intentional theoretical foundation of problem-based research to give its students a wide variety of business skills, experiences, and business client engagement opportunities that serve as “real-world” learning moments and pathways for educational and occupational success.

Many of these same sports marketing and sports industry focused research projects for sports marketing students also have some type of communal based engagement connection to them (usually

when done as student-led consulting projects for professional sports teams and sport organizations) in order to help understand how sport properties can better serve the communities, existing and new fan bases, and even under-represented people groups in a certain geographic area (Cadwallader, Atwong, & Lebard, 2014; Mottner & Wymer, 2011). All these traditional and developed teaching experiences within the Sports Marketing Concentration coursework (presented in this paper), combined with the community and fan engagement focuses of many of the “Marketing Research” projects stem from helpful, historical marketing methods that not only undergird marketing curriculum, but continue to support marketing education and student growth in our present day (Ferrell, Hair, Marshall, & Tamilia, 2015). Additionally, the coursework in the Sports Marketing Concentration is consistently assessed and evaluated by their Sports Marketing Advisory Board members to make sure it is not only academically rigorous and helpful to the students and the constituents they work and engage with, but also professionally relevant and connected to the sport industry’s needs in this present age (Seifried, Agyemang, & Walker, 2021).

The marketing literature has also shown over time a need for continued student education and experience in both digital marketing and marketing analytics, and an increased focus on the usefulness of these tools in marketing; specifically, as it relates to customer engagement, acquisition, and retention (Weathers & Aragon, 2019). The faculty within the Sports Marketing Concentration (at this private, southeastern university in the United States) have worked intently to create class content, other marketing electives, and even sport industry specific undergraduate and MBA classes (“Sports Analytics” and “Fan Experience and Analytic-Based Engagement”) that provide real-time education and skill-based learning in the digital, social, and analytical realms of marketing technology (Jin-Se, Jai-Han, & Mi-Suk, 2018). These classes were built for students to not only understand the need for engaging customers consistently, but *how* to do that and with *what* technological tools to do that with (Bartholomew, Newman, & Newman, 2020). These digital, social, and analytical emphases embedded within classes as the core of content have continued to attract and excite marketing students who are passionate about sports and desire to work in the sports industry. These emphases have also helped to align the classes, teaching methods, research focuses, and content areas with advisory board member recommendations rooted in analytical growth and strong digital and social skills for students. Thus, there continues to be a “loop-closing” between what the sports industry demands from students, what the advisory board members recommend in terms of digital, social, and analytical learning and skillset development, and what the students are learning and practicing both in the classroom and with industry partners and research clients.

Finally, the Sports Marketing Concentration from a curriculum standpoint has always been focused on professionalism, the development of soft skills, and the strong emphases of interpersonal communication, the ability to sell, and ability to relate to many different constituent bases. These professional and interpersonal focuses of the Sports Marketing Concentration seek to fill a need for soft skill vocational development amongst students that prepares them exceptionally well to interview and relate to clients (even through consulting-based research classes) (DeLong, 2017). In addition, these needed soft skills help come across as prepared and able to engage and communicate with a variety of business and sport industry constituents (DeLong, 2017). The Sports Marketing Concentration through its classes, faculty mentored student research projects, and intentional student mentoring and relationship

building efforts places a high priority on career exposure, career path emphasis, and helping students understand the various sports marketing career options as they step out into the business world (Kelley & Bridges, 2005). Once again, the advisory board members play a crucial role in this career preparation for students as well in that students are often matched with advisory board members for further career mentoring and counseling, and advisory board members are asked often to help sports marketing students find internships, volunteer opportunities, and even entry level jobs in the sports industry to help launch these students' careers (Gupta, Burns, & Schiferl, 2010). In addition, while these business students are being mentored professionally and personally by advisory board members, the Sports Marketing and Sports Business faculty within the school of business are intentionally meeting with these same students on an ongoing basis helping them find volunteer and internship opportunities, and having detailed conversations regarding graduate school and career pursuits so that a complete picture of business education mentoring is taking place (Rosselot-Merritt & Bloch, 2019).

All these professionalism and career-based focuses within the sports marketing coursework and the faculty engagements with students is relationally intentional and designed to help students think critically regarding how they come across professionally. In addition, the concentration emphasizes critical and realistic thinking as it relates to sport industry demands and where students stand in terms of the required skillsets and tools needed to be employed in the sports industry (Seifried, Agyemang, & Walker, 2021). One of many ways this critical thinking and realistic measuring for students takes place within sports marketing coursework is in the frequent reviewing of current sport marketing job postings and websites where students can go to review jobs for themselves. Class lectures, assignments, course content, and even marketing research projects are often grounded in job postings and relevant job pursuit information so that students can stay informed on what is available for their vocational pursuits, but also so that students can think critically and act in a self-aware manner in terms of what they professionally possess, and what they need to work on and attain in order to be realistically qualified for jobs in the sports industry.

Historical Background Rooted in Collaboration

The first "Sports Marketing" class at this small, private university in their business school (AACSB) was offered in January (Jan-Term) of 2010. This new and innovative class was the first of its kind within AACSB colleges and schools of business in the southeast, and quickly gained popularity amongst business students considering its engaging and real-time sports business content, as well as its inventive method for bringing in guest speakers that worked in the sports industry and could make sports marketing content "come alive" for the students. This intentional example of collaboration between sports marketing and sports industry guest speakers would eventually lead to the creation of a Sports Marketing Advisory Board for the concentration, but initially these guest speakers provided key industry contacts for students, and helpful occupational examples for these students to learn from. In addition, this university's business and marketing alumni also quickly got involved with this sports marketing class and not only served as guest speakers, but really started to champion the class and content in the Birmingham community and southeast region generally.

The next big step for this class and the sports marketing educational efforts happened in 2011 when a new dean took over in the school of business. The sports marketing class had been taught a few times

by 2011 and continued to grow in both interest and popularity with students (evidenced by its strong enrollment numbers). The idea was pitched to the new dean to start some type of sports marketing program and build off the class's success, and what was decided was to create an entire Sports Marketing Concentration (four classes) in 2012 that could not only house the growing sports marketing class, but also that could provide additional sports marketing training.

This newly developed Sports Marketing Concentration was initially designed for Junior-level students in the school of business who had already completed all their business core classes and were ready to declare a concentration (to add on to their business major of choice). A concentration also was chosen over creating a major or minor in that a concentration (4 classes) gave students flexibility with their class schedules and majors, intimate relationships with their professors since only ten students were selected into the concentration each year, and the ability for faculty to have higher placement rates for students seeking active employment in the sports industry (since faculty were teaching and helping a manageable number of students). In addition, the program director also met with the Athletic Director at the university right when the concentration was started and discussed a partnership where every sports marketing student could volunteer one semester in the athletic department for learning, professional growth, and relationship building.

Thus, every new student who entered the Sports Marketing Concentration in 2012 and 2013 was able to take three sports marketing-focused classes (Sports Marketing, Advanced Theory and Practice in Sports Marketing, and a Business Internship in Sports Marketing), one research-based class for a sports marketing focused research project (mentored by a faculty member), and volunteer for one semester in the athletic department for further professional development and relationship building. The collaboration between the school of business and the university's athletic department was incredibly successful and continues to thrive in present day, so much so that athletic department personnel come and speak with sports marketing students every fall to let them know about a multitude of volunteer opportunities for these students helping with fall and spring sports teams and events.

Collaboration has also been found between the Sports Marketing Program and the "Marketing Research" class in the school of business for the last eight years. The founding director of the Sports Marketing Concentration went to the business faculty member who taught "Marketing Research" and pitched the idea to have sports marketing students in the "Marketing Research" class work on a sports industry research project (usually sports marketing, sales, sponsorship focused project) every semester. The program director works with the "Marketing Research" class instructor to help mentor these sports marketing specific research projects, monitor research progress of the students throughout the semester, and oversee student project presentations (both to faculty and sport teams/organizations if client-based project). Thus, the Sports Marketing Concentration has benefitted from great collaboration externally with the athletic department and other academic units across campus, as well as internally within the school of business working with professors in classes such as "Marketing Research" to give students a well-rounded classroom, research-focused, and industry-based educational and professional experience.

Program Growth Rooted in Humility

Another major piece of the creation of the Sports Marketing Concentration in the school of business was the creation and growth of the Sports Marketing Advisory Board (Kilcrease, 2010). The initial idea for an advisory board started with the creation of the first sports marketing class and the class instructor's desire to reach out to both alumni and local Birmingham sports industry professionals to serve as guest speakers in class. As time went on and as more industry professionals got excited about the creation and growth of the Sports Marketing Concentration as a whole, the concept of an actual advisory board was floated given the strong interest and desire from alumni and industry professionals to help sports marketing students and be a part of this new initiative. The core of the advisory board started with, and still has been business school alumni who love the university and its school of business, and this relational equity and love for the school has been a huge asset in building out a robust advisory board of now more than twenty men and women who work in and around the sports industry.

The advisory board exists to help students first and foremost through professional relationship building efforts, through opening doors for students for internships and entry-level job opportunities, as well as advising student research projects and job pursuits. The advisory board also helps sports marketing and sports business faculty by informing curriculum creation and course adjustments to keep the courses relevant and industry focused (Snead, Coleman, & McKinney Jr., 2019). In addition, there is frequent communication by sports marketing faculty with the advisory board via email and phone calls, virtual meetings, and specifically when the sports marketing professors meet with the advisory board twice a year (once in the fall and once in the spring) on campus for greater engagement and creative brainstorming. Thus, there has been a refreshing humility that has infused all the collaboration between the Sports Marketing Concentration and the athletic department, "Marketing Research" class, advisory board, and other campus academic units in that the goal has been to create a concentration that is focused on student-learning, exceptional industry opportunities, and job placement specifically in the sports industry (if the students so choose to end up pursuing that route).

This humility has been evident not only in the positive and varied working relationships across the campus and within the school of business, but also with advisory board members giving their time, energy, and resources to mentor students, listen and helpfully critique research projects and presentations, as well as support the sports marketing faculty by being willing to always inform and help mold the coursework of the concentration to make sure it is cutting edge and sports industry relevant. One would encourage any college or school of business who plans on starting a sports marketing or sports business program to intentionally create an advisory board (and specifically enlist alum working in the sports industry) and work with them as valuable resources in creating and growing a robust and industry-relevant course plan that is attractive to students both now and down the road.

It is About the Students...Period!

It sounds noble and even like a well-worn cliché to say that programs, major, concentrations, etc. are "all about the students", and often this phrase does come across in that manner. Even so, the faculty in the school of business, and specifically the sports marketing faculty truly have sought to always put the students first when it came to course creation, student learning opportunities, mentor and industry relationships, and even professional development scenarios where sports marketing students have been able to travel to neat places and present research in front of sports industry executives. The Sports

Marketing Concentration has sought to be about the students in that the university in general is a teaching and mentoring focused university that truly seeks (although not perfectly) to build relationships with students that foster comradery, professional development, and future conversation informed by the present. In short, the school of business, and the Sports Marketing program, has sought to create opportunities for students where they not only thrive and grow their chances for professional success, but also create these opportunities in a way that stays true to the mission of the university and fosters long-term relational equity with the students as future professionals.

The first helpful example of this student-centered focus that other colleges and schools of business can to as well is to create outstanding industry-specific professional development relationships and opportunities that help students grow academically, mature relationally, and thrive professionally. To date, the Sports Marketing Concentration in general, and particularly seniors in the “Advanced Theory and Practice in Sports Marketing” course (as part of the four-course concentration) have been able to present marketing research and consulting projects (digital and social media analytics influenced) to: the Atlanta Braves, Birmingham Legion, Chick-Fil-A Marketing, Coca-Cola Sports Marketing, Miami Dolphins, Minor League Baseball, the NBA League Office, Israeli Football League, Bayern Munich F.C., Nike, New Orleans Saints, the Southeastern Conference (SEC), and other sports industry teams and organizations in addition to the university’s athletic department (Spiller & Tuten, 2015). These opportunities for sports marketing students to stand in front of industry executives (and many on the Sports Marketing Advisory Board) and practice speaking and presenting professionally, along with learning from these executives and even auditioning for internships and entry level jobs as been paramount to student’s success and the growth of the concentration. Students want to be in programs where they will learn and have these opportunities, and the Sports Marketing Concentration and its faculty have sought to be proactive and intentional with seeking industry-relevant opportunities (domestically and internationally) like these for students (Ratten & Ratten, 2011).

Second, as the school of business (with great support from its then Dean) and the Sports Marketing Program Director worked with the Provost (who had a background in analytics) to first create “The Center for Sports Analytics” in 2017, the center quickly became another valuable resource for incredible student opportunities related to analytic research projects, independent studies related to sports analytics, and specifically a very successful partnership in analytics with the university’s athletic department. One of the management faculty in the school of business who had a background in, and passion for analytics in sports (particularly baseball, football, and hockey) took it upon himself to selflessly start to build effective working relationships with coaches, athletic administrators, and athletic support staff in order to create a great working relationship between the school of business and athletics, and specifically to provide sports marketing students opportunities at using their analytic interests and talents to help university sports teams on and off the court and field. The success of these initial analytic research opportunities for students turned into three different tracks in the school of business for its students related to sports analytics (Sports Business Analytics with a marketing focus, Sports Business Analytics with a finance focus, and Player and Team Performance Analytics).

The initial relationship building and analytic project development work (along with the analytic tracks in the school of business) for athletics has turned into a robust partnership, and incredible opportunities

for students in the school of business in that now sports marketing and sports analytics students are imbedded every academic year with all men's and women's varsity sports teams at the university working with the coaches and support staff on analytic projects related to player and team performance, scouting and recruiting, competitive advantage gains, and many other related tasks. In addition, a "Sports Analytics" class was created as an elective in the school of business to support and enhance these growing student analytic focused professional opportunities, as well as to better educate students on the growing need for analytic knowledge in the sports industry.

Furthermore, a "Data-Analytics" Concentration has been created now in the school of business to support business analytic growth and industry need, and to provide additional classes for students so they can maximize opportunities to pursue business analytic work in the sports industry or any domestic or international business field. In addition, the school of business (seeking humble collaboration across campus) worked across campus with the department of Health Informatics to help encourage the creation of a "Sports Injury and Prevention" Concentration that is supported by research through the Center for Sports Analytics and is also connected to endeavors in the university's athletic department. Thus, with a student-centered commitment and dedication, the school of business has been blessed to grow their Sports Marketing class into a concentration, industry-relevant and professionally student-centered opportunities in sports, and even business and player performance analytic work for professional teams and organizations as well as for athletics and their sports teams. Business students have these opportunities because the concentration has been blessed to grow and thrive, and the biggest reason for this blessing and success has been putting students and student opportunities first as it relates to professional development, learning, and sport industry opportunity.

Finally, in 2020, the school of business sought to expand academic and professional experiences for students in sports marketing and sports business by creating an MBA Concentration (one of only a few sports business or sports marketing MBA programs in the United States within AACSB environments) in Sports Business that encompassed MBA classes in strategic revenue generation, fan experience and analytic-based engagement, professional development in the sports industry, as well as focused and deeper learning related to the business sides of college sports. This MBA concentration in Sports Business was created for MBA students and the school of business in the fall of 2020, launched in the spring of 2021, and has been blessed to already grow and attract a lot of student attention and excitement as the academic year turns to the fall of 2021. Thus, sports marketing undergraduate emphases and program growth ten years ago has now led the university and its school of business to continue serving students intentionally and professionally by leading to the creation and growth of an MBA Concentration in Sports Business as well.

Industry Involvement Beyond the Classroom

The final key to success in creating, growing, and supporting the Sports Marketing Concentration within the school of business is to have intentional, direct involvement from sports industry executives and personnel that helps and sharpens students, faculty, curriculum, and professional development (Pefanis-Schlee & Harich, 2010). In addition to the creation of the advisory board and all that advisory board members do for sports marketing students and faculty (including serving as helpful guest speakers in class), the Director of the Sports Marketing Concentration and other related faculty have been

intentional in reaching out to and involving key sport industry personnel in student learning and professional growth as it relates to academic, professional, and spiritual mentoring. The best example of this key industry involvement within the Sports Marketing Concentration is the partnership the program has with executives from the Atlanta Braves. The Atlanta Braves have fifteen to twenty men and women who work in senior and executive positions who have agreed to partner with the school of business in general, the Sports Marketing Concentration in particular, and related academic arms across campus. This partnership has led to direct peer-to-peer spiritual and professional mentoring relationships with students simply to “give back”, help guide students personally, professionally, and spiritually, and to help hone and clarify occupational paths and professional goals for these students. This direct industry involvement as it intentionally relates to multi-faceted mentoring and student-centered growth only enhances the concentration, but more importantly serves as an attractive additional student engagement connection for its students while providing another platform for students to get exposed to and learn from sports industry personnel (Jin-Se, Jai-Han, & Mi-Suk, 2018).

Other colleges and schools of business can take this same type of mindset related to creating intentional mentoring partnerships with sport industry personnel through intentional relationships with college athletic departments, minor and major league professional sport organizations (such as the Atlanta Braves baseball team), and even third-party sports marketing and sports business companies that work in or touch the sports industry in some way. This industry involvement serves as another intentional, student-centered pathway for incredible sports marketing and sports business learning for students, as well as relationship and professional growth opportunities as students get mentored by men and women in the sports industry who have gone before them.

Implications for Program Building

The purpose and primary objective of this paper is to serve as a roadmap (one pathway of many) for creating and growing an industry-relevant, academically rigorous, and student-centered sports marketing program (major, minor, concentration, etc.) in colleges and schools of business (particularly, although not exclusively for in AACSB environments). This paper sought to show how one can not only create and grow a sports marketing program, but how faculty within a college or school of business can turn sports marketing and sports business coursework and experiences into professional development ecosystems (Seifried, Agyemang, & Walker, 2021). These ecosystems can help immerse students in academic, professional, and personal experiences that not only prepare them well to work in the sports industry, but also truly give them experiential learning opportunities to help them evaluate whether this occupational path is the one for them. In addition, this paper seeks to show how this type of program can be used to build great bridges across campuses and with college athletic departments, with alumni bases, and with industry and business relationships for student growth, mentoring, and success for all parties. In short, one believes the keys to success in creating, building, and growing a successful sports marketing program relate to: collaboration, humility, student-centeredness, and sports industry involvement and buy in, and the school of business at this university has been blessed to experience these realities while serving students (not perfectly, but intentionally) through sports marketing and sports business experiences that prepare the whole person. One hopes this paper can be a source of learning and encouragement, and a guiding path that helps someone develop a similar sports marketing

program in a college or school of business where sports marketing content and career opportunities are clearly taught and shown (Ratten & Ratten, 2011; Seifried, Agyemang, & Walker, 2021).

Suggestions for Future Research

This paper provides a specific pathway for further sports business and sports marketing classes and curriculum to meet the student interest, industry relevancy, and occupational demand of a growing \$80 billion industry in The United States alone (Statista, 2022). The paper lays out specific courses, emphases of these courses, industry-relevance and research connections for student learning opportunities, as well as the ability for students to be mentored academically and professionally. In light of this paper's focuses, one helpful suggestion for future research in the same vein as this paper is to look at other innovative, new, and industry-relevant business classes and curriculum pathways (majors, minors, concentrations, etc.) that train students in and point them to much-needed occupational pathways in areas such as business analytics and IT, virtual and augmented reality, blockchain and cryptocurrency, and even the metaverse (Wu & Chen, 2021). By having further research and papers such as this that tangibly show business faculty and administrators how to create, build, grow, and sustain new and innovative business programs, then schools and colleges of business will have more helpful ideas, pathways, and curriculum blueprints for both faculty development and attraction, as well as continued guidance and scholarly support for new methods of student engagement and success both in the classroom and in the marketplace.

References

- Abernethy, A., & Padgett, D. (2011). A decade of scholarship in marketing education. *Journal of Marketing Education, 33*(3), 326-336.
- Bartholomew, D., Newman, C., & Newman, L. (2020). a snapshot of the marketing capstone course at u.s.-based aacsb schools. *Marketing Education Review, ,* 26-40.
- Blass, E. (2018). Developing a curriculum for aspiring entrepreneurs: What do they really need to learn? *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education, 21*(4), 1-14.
- Brown-McCabe, D., & Meuter, M. (2011). A student view of technology in the classroom: Does it enhance the seven principles of good practice in undergraduate education?. *Journal of Marketing Education, 33*(2), 149-159.
- Cadwallader, S., Atwong, C., & Lebard, A. (2014). Proposing community-based learning in the marketing curriculum. *Marketing Education Review, (137),* 150.
- Choi, B., Tong, P., & Kelley, C. (2010). An exploratory study of student learning assessment in marketing programs. *Advancement of Marketing Education, 16,* 10-19.
- DeLong, D. (2017). An exploratory study of the influence of soft and hard skills on entry level marketing position interviews. *Marketing Education Review, ,* 159-169.
- Ferrell, O., Hair, J., Marshall, G., & Tamilia, R. (2015). Understanding the history of marketing education to improve classroom instruction. *Marketing Education Review, 159-175.*
- Granitz, N., & Koernig, S. (2011). Web 2.0 and marketing education: Explanations and experiential applications. *Journal of Marketing Education, 33*(1), 57-72.
- Gupta, P., Burns, D., & Schiferl, J. (2010). An exploration of student satisfaction with internship experiences in marketing. *Business Education and Administration, 2*(1), 27-37.
- Jin-Se, K., Jai-Han, A., & Mi-Suk, K. (2018). Developing competency based integrated curriculum for fostering sports marketer in sports industry. *Journal of Digital Convergence, 16*(6), 449-462.
- Kelley, C., Tong, P., & Joon-Choi, B. (2010). A review of assessment of student learning programs at AACSB schools: A dean's perspective. *Journal of Education for Business, 85*(5), 299-306.
- Kilcrease, K. (2010). Faculty perceptions of business advisory boards: The challenge for effective communication. *Journal of Education for Business, 86*(2), 78-83.
- Le Meunier-Fitzhugh, K., & Piercy, N. (2010). Drivers of sales and marketing collaboration in business-to-business selling organizations. *Journal of Marketing Management, 25*(5-6), 611-633.

- Le Meunier-FitzHugh, K., & Piercy, N. (2007). Exploring collaboration between sales and marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, 41(7/8), 939-955.
- Liesz, T., & Porter, J. (2015). Bridging the gap: An applied example of the need to integrate a business curriculum. *Business Education Innovation Journal*, 7(1), 51-61.
- Madhavaram, S., & Laverie, D. (2010). Developing pedagogical competence: Issues and implications for marketing education. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 32(2), 197-213.
- Maldonado, M. (2018). Data mining student choices: A new approach to business curriculum planning. *Journal of Education for Business*, 93(5), 196-203.
- Mottner, S., & Wymer, W. (2011). Nonprofit education: Course offerings and perceptions in accredited U.S. business schools. *Journal of Nonprofit and Public Sector Marketing*, 23(1), 1-19.
- Pefanis-Schlee, R., & Harich, K. (2010). Knowledge and skill requirements for marketing jobs in the 21st century. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 32(3), 341-352.
- Qasim, A., & Kharbat, F. (2020). Blockchain technology, business data analytics, and artificial intelligence: Use in the accounting profession and ideas for inclusion into the accounting curriculum. *American Accounting Association*, 17(1), 107-117.
- Ratten, V., & Ratten, H. (2011). International sport marketing: Practical and future research implications. *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, 26(8), 614-620.
- Rosselot-Merritt, J., & Bloch, J. (2019). Mentoring in business and professional communication: Case study of a multiyear dynamic. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, 83(1), 5-33.
- Seifried, C., Agyemang, K., Walker, N., & Soebbing, B. (2021). Sport management and business schools: A growing partnership in a changing higher education environment. *The International Journal of Management Education*, 19(3).
- Smith, P., & Gibson, L. (2016). In Watts M. (Ed.), *New directions for teaching and learning*. San Francisco: Josey-Bass.
- Snead, K., Coleman, F., & McKinney Jr., E. (2019). On the use of advisory board input for revising master of accountancy curriculum. *Advances in Accounting Education*, 23, 153-176.
- Spiller, L., & Tuten, T. (2015). Integrating metrics across the marketing curriculum: The digital and social media opportunity. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 37(2), 114-126.
- Statista. (2022). North America sports market size from 2009 to 2023 (in billion U.S. dollars)*. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/214960/revenue-of-the-north-american-sports-market/>
- Weathers, D., & Aragon, O. (2019). Integrating analytics into marketing curricula: Challenges and effective practices for developing six critical competencies. *Marketing Education Review*, 266-282.
- Wu, Y., & Chen, J. (2021). Stimulating innovation with an innovative curriculum: A curriculum design for a course on new product development. *The International Journal of Management Education*, 19(3).