

3-1-2023

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Recommended Citation

Petersen, Jeffrey C. (2023) "Building upon the Foundation: Mentoring and Service in the Applied Sport Management Association," *Journal of Applied Sport Management*. Vol. 15 : Iss. 1.

<https://doi.org/10.7290/jasm159116>

Available at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/jasm/vol15/iss1/2>

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Building Upon the Foundation: Mentoring and Service in the Applied Sport Management Association

Jeffrey Petersen

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Abstract

The Applied Sport Management Association's Distinguished Service & Mentorship Award was initiated in 2022 as a renaming and repurposing of the ASMA Scholar Lifetime Achievement Award presented from 2009 to 2020. This service and mentorship award recognizes an ASMA member who has exhibited continued, exemplary service to ASMA, who connects sport management research with practitioners in an applied manner, and who demonstrates dedication to students and mentorship within the ASMA. Recipients of this award provide a keynote address to the ASMA membership at the annual conference. The content of this address is published in the *Journal of Applied Sport Management*, the peer-reviewed journal and official publication of ASMA.

Keywords: *mentorship, service, facilities*

I appreciate this warm reception, and I want to express my gratitude to ASMA President, Dr. Adam Pfleeger, and the rest of the Applied Sport Management Association (ASMA) executive board for bestowing upon me this honor. I also want to express my appreciation to Dr. Patrick Marsh and the rest of this year's conference organizing committee from Samford University for their outstanding work in hosting this year's conference here in Birmingham.

It is indeed humbling to follow in the path of the many leaders and colleagues within our association and to follow Dr. Michael Martinez from Louisiana State University as the inaugural Distinguished Service and Mentorship Award recipient this past year in 2022. Since its inception, under the initial vision and leadership of Dr. Fred Green at Troy University, the Applied Sport Management Association continues to seek to build strong connections between sport management scholars and sport industry practitioners (Martinez, 2022). This award recognizes that the growth and success of this organization are rooted in the mentorship and service of its founders, leaders, and members and this now includes each of you.

Any of my current or former students will not be at all surprised by this anchoring statement for my address today, "Facilities are foundational." It is a common mantra for my facility and event management courses as well as a grounding concept for much of my research work. Facilities are foundational to the sport enterprise, and the enterprise of sport grounds all of our common connections within this Applied Sport Management Association. So please indulge me for a few minutes as we take a brief virtual venue tour to explore just a few facilities that will help to form a foundation for our time together today.

Let me begin by stating that I have long been captivated by the classic form of the pyramid. Perhaps it stems all the way back to elementary school social studies and exposure to and fascination with the ancient pyramids in Egypt. These fascinating and massive structures are captivating in their symmetrical design, miraculous construction, and their ability to draw our attention to heavenly heights. Indeed, the Great Pyramid of Giza rises to a height of 454 feet (Procter & Kozak-Holland, 2019). The design of the pyramids may focus our attention skyward, but what forms the foundation of these pyramids and what lies below the surface may be even more captivating. It is within the foundations of these Egyptian pyramids that lie the chambers of treasures and tombs of the Pharaohs. The Egyptian pyramids remain icons of their era, and their foundations have proven to be an enduring base to uphold them through the ages.

Ancient pyramid structures, however, are not limited to a single continent or culture. There are many Mesoamerican pyramids associated with the Mayan, Incan, Olmec, and Aztec peoples. Personally, I find the complex of pyramids and structures of Chichen Itza within the current Yucatan region of Mexico of great interest. The pyramid of Chichen Itza differs from the Egyptian pyramids in part by its focus on the top or pinnacle of the pyramid rather than the base or what lies below the base. The elaborate complex in this Chichen Itza site includes not only pyramids but also a direct connection to sport. A large ball court associated with an ancient traditional sport, *ulama*, forms a central component of this complex (Petersen, 2017). The inclusion of sport with these ancient pyramids complex will help connect to our modern sporting pyramid venues.

Our contemporary era provides some additional pyramid structures with a direct connection to sport. First, we should consider the Walter Pyramid at California State University in Long Beach. This venue opened in 1994 as a 4,000-seat arena with a construction cost of \$23 million, and with a span of 345 feet on each side and rising to a height of 18 stories (190 feet) (McLeod, 1992). The Walter Pyramid has

become an icon within the city of Long Beach while serving as the home of Long Beach State's volleyball and men's and women's basketball programs.

Now we will move a bit closer to Birmingham to consider the largest modern sport pyramid. Just a few hours up Interstate 22 you will find the Memphis Pyramid, also known as the Great American Pyramid or the Pyramid Arena. Opened in 1991 at a cost of \$65 million, this 20,142-seat arena served as the home of the University of Memphis basketball from 1991-2004 as well as the home of the Memphis Pharaohs of the Arena Football League (AFL) from 1995-96, along with hosting the National Basketball Association's (NBA) Memphis Grizzlies from 2001-04 (Sills, 2020). With a base of 321 feet on each side and rising to a height of 32 stories high (321 feet), this structure has been repurposed as Bass Pro Shops' premier retail location with a restaurant and observation deck at the peak providing spectacular views of the Memphis skyline and the Mississippi River and river valley (Sills, 2020).

While these venues represent the elegance of this pyramid design, the power of the pyramid in sport is not limited strictly to sport venues. Perhaps the most famous use of pyramids in sport would be Coach John Wooden's "Pyramid of Success" (Wooden & Carty, 2005). This detailed model of character components that were deemed vital for the achievement of competitive greatness remains highly referenced within both the coaching and leadership contexts. It is my goal now to employ a new model of the pyramid as a tool to examine the role of mentoring and service within our Applied Sport Management Association. Within this limited time, I certainly will not delve into the depths of a model as detailed as Wooden's 15 traits and 10 attitudes, but I will seek to demonstrate some of the key aspects of mentorship and service that can relate to my own unique pyramid model.

This pyramid of mentorship and service begins as a personal model with a wide foundation composed of the many individuals, experiences, and organizations that have impacted each of you within your personal and professional development. Stop for a moment and consider who and/or what was involved in allowing you to be a contributing participant in this 2023 ASMA conference. Whether you are a student researcher or case study competitor, a teaching or researching faculty member, or a professional practitioner in sport, none of us truly arrived here today alone. The influence and impact of our mentors and those serving us have allowed us to climb, step by step, higher and higher upon our own pyramid. This year's conference experience may represent a step on your journey or perhaps more of a pyramid pinnacle moment for those case study winners or research award winners honored here today. Regardless of where you perceive yourself within your pyramid journey, we each need to remember to stop and enjoy the view. Each step up gives us a greater vantage point and greater perspective, and as we scan below, we need to recognize the foundation upon which we stand. As you stop to enjoy this view, we should each pause and reflect upon who and what helped lead you to this moment. My direct challenge to you in this reflection is that you not only remember who mentored and served you, but that you also take action to text or call during your travels homeward today to express your gratitude.

My personal application of this action step brings back a stream of mentors that have helped to bring me to this moment here with you in the ASMA. From my work in academia, it begins with Dr. Armond Seidler who as an emeriti faculty member served as the professor of my first sport facilities course at the University of New Mexico and who additionally served as the de facto chair of my dissertation research regarding facility assessment for Indoor Activity and Ancillary Space in New Mexico High Schools.

Next, Dr. Robert Tucker from Loras College encouraged my first professional research presentation from this dissertation research in 1999 at the Iowa Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (IAPHERD) conference at the University of Northern Iowa. Third would be Dr. Todd Seidler, now at the University of New Mexico, but was then at Wayne State, who provided my initial connection with the Council on Facilities and Equipment in 2000 that led to my first academic publication in creating a chapter for the 10th edition of *Facilities Planning for Health, Fitness, Physical Activity, Recreation, and Sports*. For your own application of this pyramid building, you may think in general about your career or specifically about this year's ASMA conference, but either way, I am confident that my first call to action has brought to the top of mind some key mentors for you. Again, I urge you to initiate a communication of appreciation to them today.

The final portion of my pyramid model creates the most provocative component, and this component pertains to each of our own callings to mentorship and service. It is provocative not because we each need to engage in service and mentorship but because this pyramid component creates an apparently impossible or unstable structure. As each foundational pyramid reaches its apex, it reaches a point of inflection where the pinnacle or ending point becomes the beginning point of growth where the development of each individual begins to expand outward by providing rather than simply receiving service and mentorship. It is after this inflection point that our acts of service and mentorship are multiplied for an ever-increasing impact on others. I would classify this phenomenon as an hourglass pyramid model of service and mentorship. This model demonstrates that there remains more to achieve after a personal or professional apex and that our own steps of service and mentorship can create broad impacts as we seek to serve others.

Some may look at this model and state that this hourglass pyramid cannot actually exist and that it must collapse under its own weight. While we might not find an extant example of this model in Egypt, Central America, or even in Memphis, it does not mean that it does not or cannot exist. We may need to expand our search to explore virtual worlds and realities in order to see this fully implemented, and I did find such a structure in the virtual world of Minecraft. I contend that this hourglass pyramid model can indeed exist in our individual realities, and here based upon this model is my call to you as members of the ASMA. For our student case-study participants, your next steps in service or mentorship could include becoming team leaders or captains for next year's case study, leading future teams within your school, or perhaps assuming one of the newly emerging roles of student representative in the ASMA executive board. For faculty and student researchers, your next steps of service might include submitting your research manuscripts to ASMA's *Journal of Applied Sport Management (JASM)* or volunteering to serve as a reviewer for a JASM manuscript or for ASMA conference presentation submissions. Faculty members might also seek to engage in service more deeply to ASMA through volunteering with the case study competition as a judge or case writer, contributing to our journal as an ad-hoc manuscript reviewer, or seeking greater service on the executive board. For professional practitioners, your next steps of service might include judging the case study competition, speaking as a conference panelist, or joining the executive board. Please consider not just how you might take your next step in service to the Applied Sport Management Association, but also whom you might encourage or mentor in their own involvement or engagement with ASMA. We each have peers or colleagues who could boldly take their next step within their own developmental hourglass pyramid within ASMA through your encouragement.

My personal reflection on service and mentoring in ASMA began in 2017 when a small group of us undertook the challenge of submitting a bid for the 2018 ASMA Conference. These efforts began with two graduate students, Amy Gaston and Matt Robinson, being sent to attend the last conference hosted by Louisiana State University. Based on their experience, we drafted a proposal to bring the 2018 conference to Waco and were awarded the bid. This led to the formation of an organizing committee composed of myself along with Dr. Marshall Magnusen and students Patrick Marsh, Ashley Veach, Tanner Kaplan, along with Gaston and Robinson. What is most exciting from a mentoring and service perspective is that from this group and their initial engagement with ASMA, a cascade of service and mentoring flowed and expanded upward. This includes the subsequent service of Mar Magnusen with a term as the ASMA president and his continued service as the editor of JASM, the service of now Dr. Matt Robinson as the Conference Organizing Chair for the 2021 virtual ASMA conference and his continued service now as a member at large within the ASMA Board, and the service of now Dr. Patrick Marsh as the chair of this year's ASMA conference organizing committee along with multiple years of service as the coordinator of the Dr. Samantha Roberts Case Study Competition. These multiple, far-reaching outcomes, flowing from this single initial commitment to service, demonstrate the amazing potential for service and mentorship growth within the upper half of the hourglass pyramid model. Therefore, I again call your attention to the second and third calls to action of this address, to commit to your next step of service to the ASMA and to connect with another individual to serve as a mentor.

As this year's outstanding ASMA conference in Birmingham moves toward conclusion and we look ahead to next year's opportunities in Knoxville, I close with this challenge to engage in the three action steps identified in this address within your own hourglass pyramid. First, stop and enjoy the view of your current place of development and thank at least one individual who helped you get to this point. Second, consider and commit to your own next step of service to ASMA and/or JASM. Third, identify whom you can mentor or encourage in their next step of involvement with our association in order to broaden the impact of your hourglass pyramid. May we each continue to build upon our strong foundations, and I look forward to seeing you and serving with you and your mentee in Knoxville next year.

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