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SPORTS STUDIES: PUBLIC RELATIONS GUIDELINES

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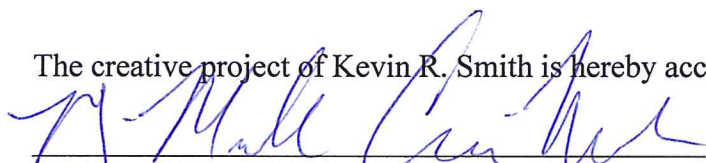
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SPORTS STUDIES
PUBLIC RELATIONS GUIDELINES

A Creative Project Submitted to the
Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts & Sciences of
John Carroll University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Arts

By
Kevin R. Smith
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The creative project of Kevin R. Smith is hereby accepted:



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5/5/2015
Date

I certify that this is the original document



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5/4/2015
Date

Sport studies continues to rapidly grow as an academic field of study. Ohio University offered the first master's program in sport management in 1966 (Crosset & Hums, 2009). Crosset and Hums (2009) note since then over 200 programs now offer sport studies programs.

With numerous sport studies programs throughout the country being added, this project is intended to function as a guide for developing a public relations plan to launch and grow these new programs. This paper will offer a hypothetical public relations plan for schools to use as a guide when adding their program. John Carroll University (JCU) will be used as the institution of reference in this document as JCU has just launched its program. Recommendations for the plan were arrived at based on research presented in the literature review and the author's experience as a sports studies student at the University of Louisville. The author attends JCU as a graduate student and works for the university as a graduate assistant. Therefore, research, the author's knowledge of the field in prior academic study, and the author's insight into JCU will be used to craft this hypothetical plan. As such, this plan is a guide as each institutions actual plan will differ.

Background on JCU's Sports Studies Program

Before reviewing the literature, some background information on JCU's program will be offered to familiarize the reader with both the institution and the scope of the formation of their sports studies program.

JCU is offering a new major starting in the Fall of 2015. The major is the Mike Cleary Program in Sports Studies (sports studies). This major is designed to give students a well-rounded foundation and knowledge to succeed in the extremely competitive marketplace in athletic administration, coaching, and wellness (John Carroll

University [JCU], n.d.a). The program was established through a generous gift from Mike Cleary, a 1956 JCU alumnus. Cleary is the director emeritus of the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA), an organization that “serves as the professional association for those in the field of intercollegiate athletics administration” (CBS Interactive, 2015, para. 1). “NACDA provides educational opportunities and serves as a vehicle for networking, the exchange of information, and advocacy on behalf of the profession” (CBS Interactive, 2015, para. 1). As this plan will demonstrate, having a highly distinguished professional from the field, Cleary's status provides credibility for the program.

Overview of the Project

This project begins with a review of the literature. Literature on how universities attract students to particular majors was limited at best. Additionally, research on sports studies as an academic field of study is still emerging. Given these two limitations, this literature review will focus on well-rounded, multi-faceted research pertinent to a hypothetical public relations plan for a sports studies program. The literature review will look at conclusions as to why students choose majors and will then shift its focus to looking at research on sports studies with an emphasis on what courses to offer, how to present the material to students, and networking. These are three vital aspects to attracting students. A public relations model will then be offered to link the two focal points of the literature review together. Next, a hypothetical public relations/marketing plan will be presented using the sports studies program at JCU as a case study. This plan will incorporate key themes from the literature review. Finally, points of consideration for the hypothetical plan will be presented followed by a conclusion.

Literature Review

In order to offer guidance for a public relations plan for a sports studies program, the necessity exists to conduct a review of literature on marketing a sports studies program. However, literature pertinent to the marketing of a specific academic major to students is limited at best. Additionally, research pertaining to the academic setting of sport is still an emerging field of study. Therefore, this literature review will blend three central aspects together to provide a framework for how to market a sports studies program to students. Conclusions as to why students choose certain majors will be examined first. Next, qualities of a good sports studies program will be examined. These two topics of review are necessary to understand when crafting a useful public relations plan.

Selecting a Major

Selecting a major represents a critical first step for new college students. While common, switching majors can be costly, especially at our case study institution of JCU. JCU lists the on-campus tuition rate with room and board as \$48,100 for the 2015-16 academic year (JCU, n.d.e). Given the high cost, it becomes essential to identify what students look for when choosing a major. Seven studies will be discussed related to college major selection. Each approaches the topic from different angles but ultimately come to relevant conclusions.

Hancock and Greenwell (2013) looked at undergraduate major choices in sport management. The duo were the lone study looking at major choices from a sport management aspect. Capstick, Green, and Beresford (2007) and Lobb, Shan, and Kolassa (2004) both approached the same issue for pharmacy students. Articles

pertaining to pharmacy students were selected to see if any of the primary reasons were the same in a different field of study. Pharmacy in particular was selected as research in pharmacy as an academic study is heavy whereas the literature pertaining to the academic study of sport is still emerging. Three studies (Beggs, Bantham, & Taylor, 2008; Cisco Systems, Inc., 2008; Keshishian, Brocavich, Boone, & Pal, 2010) took a generic approach identifying traits of major choices as a whole. Finally, Song and Glick (2004) looked at a specific culture focusing their study on Asian-American students. These studies offer insight into general trends of selection of academic study and a particular demographic group.

Conclusions from research on major selection. Examining selection of a major from a sports studies perspective, Hancock and Greenwell (2013) found interest in sport to be the strongest factor relating to selection of a sport management major. The duo also found interest in sport management and program quality to be high. Additionally, job salary was the second-lowest factor to selecting sports studies as a major (Hancock & Greenwell, 2013, p. 18). The job salary as the second-lowest factor comes as no surprise based on research from Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (2010) found starting salaries for sports studies majors tended to range between \$30,000 and \$50,000. By having a modest starting salary in the industry, students entering academic programs should be able to recognize this. As such, the findings by Hancock and Greenwell are validated.

Jones, Brooks, and Mak (2008) continue the discussion on salary in the industry. The trio found faculty members in sports studies programs noted salary as one of the biggest challenges facing programs. While job salary was not a major factor for

respondents to the study by Hancock and Greenwell (2013), low salaries for recent graduates could potentially detract from a relatively new program.

On the flip side, Capstick et al. (2007) and Lobb et al. (2004) both found salary to be a significant reason as to why students picked pharmacy as their choice of a major. Therefore, marketing a sports studies program on the notion of a high salary would not be prudent, whereas it would be when marketing to potential pharmacy students.

Hancock and Greenwell (2013) support the research of Beggs et al. (2008). Beggs et al. found the highest factor for selecting a major was the major matching with interests, thus supporting interest in sport as the number one outcome from the Hancock and Greenwell study. Financial success was also found to be low on the Beggs et al. study. It is important to note salary was rated as significantly more important for seniors. This is expected as seniors are actively looking for employment. Based on these two findings, interests should be marketed to new and prospective students.

Some researchers found subject-specific knowledge to represent a strong factor in the selection of a major. Keshishian et al. (2010) and Song and Glick (2004) both looked at science and math knowledge as an indicator of a major. Keshishian et al. found interest in chemistry to be amongst the leading factors for a pharmacy major. Song and Glick found proficiency in math to be an indicator of selecting a major with more earning potential. While an interest in chemistry is not important to a sports studies major, it is important to note a high knowledge base in a particular subject can be useful to attracting potential students. Therefore, in terms of sports studies, perhaps high schools that offer business courses would be a good target. Mathematics also presents a key component of the sports studies major. Many positions in administration, whether it be running an

athletic department or coaching, have to know how to budget. Additionally, numerous positions exist in the industry in financial capacities, so mathematics knowledge can prove to be helpful in collegiate graduates of sports studies programs. Tying this back to the Hancock and Greenwell (2013) sport-industry specific study, while knowledge of sport is not a subject it shows students can potentially pick a major based on an area of expertise. Therefore, since the sport industry has a wide-ranging skill set, even those good in mathematics can find a home in the industry in a budgeting capacity.

Another trait to attract students is the use of technology. While not a recent finding, a case study from Cisco Systems, Inc. (2008) found having wireless internet was a requirement for college students. Applying this to attracting students and ultimately the selection of sports studies as a major, a social media presence could be helpful for a startup program. Currently, a stand-alone sports studies social media presence does not exist for JCU, a component of which will be addressed later in this document. This social media aspect represents the addition of wireless internet from the Cisco Systems, Inc. (2008) finding. This component would be very cost efficient to implement.

Sports Studies Research

Sports studies research for the academic field covers a wide variety of subjects from what courses to offer to the importance of internships in the field. While an extensive collection of research does not exist on creating and marketing a sports studies program, a review of the general research on sports studies is critical to the development of guidelines for marketing a new sports studies major at a college. Articles pertaining to the academic setting of sports studies can be broken down into three groupings: course offerings (Brassie, 1989; Kelley, Beitel, DeSensi, & Blanton, 1994; Lyras & Peachey,

2011; NASPE-NASSM Joint Task Force on Sport Management Curriculum and Accreditation, 1993), administrative aspects and delivering of the academic material in the classroom (Bruening et al., 2014; Dane-Staples, 2013; Horel, Ziegenfuss, & Perry, 2013; Jones et al., 2008; Newman, 2014; Sadler, 2012; Sauer & O'Donnell, 2006), and networking (Cunningham, Sagas, Dixon, Kent, & Turner, 2005; Dees & Hall, 2012; DeSensi, Kelley, Blanton, & Beitel, 1990; Hardin, Bemiller, & Pate, 2013; Mathner & Martin, 2012; Odio, Sagas, & Kerwin, 2014).

When examining course offerings for a new major, it is critical to figure out and decide on what the class offerings will be in the major. The NASPE-NASSM Joint Task Force on Sport Management Curriculum and Accreditation (1993) was founded due to “concern over the lack of an identified and recognized base of common knowledge for sport management” (p. 159). The task force established 10 areas of study in behavioral dimensions, management and organizational skills, ethics, marketing, communication, finance, economics, legal aspects, governance, and field experiences (NASPE-NASSM Joint Task Force on Sport Management Curriculum and Accreditation, 1993). The task force also established a minimum number of full-time faculty for a sports studies program at two for the undergraduate level (NASPE-NASSM Joint Task Force on Sport Management Curriculum and Accreditation, 1993). While not a study, this document provided the framework for the academic field of sports studies by discussing which classes to offer.

Kelley et al. (1994) built upon the foundation of courses set out by the NASPE-NASSM Joint Task Force on Sport Management Curriculum and Accreditation (1993). Kelley et al. set out to broaden the field of sports studies by implementing segments

including sport for recreation, merchandising, and sport travel. Kelley et al. proposed areas of specialization such as retail sales, contract law, and program planning. These three examples, while tying into the core classes proposed by the NASPE-NASSM Joint Task Force on Sport Management Curriculum and Accreditation, take the core classes one step further into areas of specialization. These new classes take the learning component and apply it to a highly specialized field such as retail sales, which is a big business. Take the Green Bay Packers for example in terms of retail sales in sport. The Green Bay Packers expanded its team store from 1,710 square feet to 12,000 square feet with the renovations to Lambeau Field (Ballparks.com, 2015). Given this massive upgrade, it validates the need for retail sales to be a segment into sports studies.

The NASPE-NASSM framework developed into the Commission on Sport Management Accreditation (COSMA) in 2008 (COSMA, n.d.a). COSMA provides an accreditation process for sports studies programs. However, an alarming trend found by Jones et al. (2008) was that 70 percent of programs were not accredited by COSMA. This is evidenced by COSMA (n.d.b) who currently only lists 36 programs in the United States as official accredited programs. In order to give prospective sports studies majors at JCU a competitive advantage, it is necessary for the program to achieve COSMA accreditation.

Prior to the NASPE-NASSM Joint Task Force on Sport Management Curriculum and Accreditation, the NASPE attempted to identify its own model in 1987. The NASPE originally only addressed three components of study in, “Full courses in business management, marketing, economics, accounting, finance, and computer science; the application areas of study composed of sport foundations; and field experiences”

(Brassie, 1989, p. 158). Brassie (1989) found one major flaw with course offerings in sports studies programs. This flaw was the lack of distinction between undergraduate and graduate level offerings. Essentially, one could take a course and have it count towards either an undergraduate or graduate program. Therefore, those returning to pursue a Master's in the same program would be taking every class over again with the same material. Brassie proposed expanding upon the NASPE guidelines by adding courses in the fields of communication, advertising, fund-raising, and ethics to further supplement the core business and sports studies offerings.

Researchers have continued to identify areas in the industry for future growth in academic study. Sport for development presents an area of potential exploration for the sports studies major.

Lyras and Peachey (2011) define sport for development as:

The use of sport to exert a positive influence on public health, the socialization of children, youths and adults, the social inclusion of the disadvantaged, the economic development of regions and states, and on fostering intercultural exchange and conflict resolution. (p. 311)

This is important because sport for development serves others. This ties into the Jesuit mission at JCU to be men and women for others. By using sport for development in the classroom setting, students can apply classroom concepts to social change (Lyras & Peachey, 2011). This notion of sport for development further expands upon the core elements of a sports studies curriculum by adding in another specialized area of study in the industry.

Administrative aspects and delivery of the academic material is important in the field of sports studies. The field of sports studies has many different academic program names which can play a role in attracting students given the focus of the program. Additionally, the delivery methods of the material in the classroom can play a key role in student engagement in the program. How to construct the learning environment and when to offer the classes in the program is of final importance in this aspect.

Jones et al. (2008) approached the setup of the major by looking at logistical and administrative characteristics of existing programs. Jones et al. found nearly 62 percent of the programs in the United States are referred to as sport management. Sports studies, the name of case study institution's program, was not amongst the top three in terms of name designation of the major (Jones et al., 2008). While future research could investigate the naming of an academic major and its impact on selection, this is not the purpose of this paper. Sports studies offers a broader name for an academic program versus sport management which would only focus on managerial aspects in its academic offerings. JCU's program has three tracks in administration, coaching, and wellness (JCU, n.d.a). Therefore, since the program encompasses a wide field of study in the industry, the name selection of sports studies for our case study institution is appropriate in this case. If only an administration track was offered, than a sport management title for the program would be more appropriate.

When considering adding a new major, the necessity exists to look at student retention. Sauer and O'Donnell (2006) looked at just that. The duo found that "students who enroll in new majors will be less likely to drop out of school" (Sauer & O'Donnell, 2006, p. 148). This is beneficial to marketers working with new academic programs.

Given the high degree of investment from a financial perspective of attending college referenced earlier by the costs of attending our case study institution, students enrolling in the sports studies program are more likely to graduate from JCU based on the finding from Sauer and O'Donnell. The students thus potentially put their tuition money to better use by having the competitive advantage with the NACDA partnership. However, at the same time, this study had a significant drawback in only 4.5 percent of students who responded to the survey enrolled in new majors (Sauer & O'Donnell, 2006). This finding has a major pro and con. It is encouraging to see students enrolling in new majors have a higher retention rate. However, the market share is small for students who do enroll in new majors based on the finding from Sauer and O'Donnell.

Innovation is key to having a sports studies classroom at the university level. Sauer and O'Donnell (2006) refer to those students selecting a new major as innovators. The authors felt by declaring a new major, there is an enhancement to the student profile in relation to academic fit (Sauer & O'Donnell, 2006). The authors further enhanced their notion of innovator by finding, "Students are more open to a variety of topics, and force instructors to have a greater need to keep the course cutting edge," (Sauer & O'Donnell, 2006, p. 150). By having a new major, professors can set up the classroom experience to best fit the first group of students rather than incoming students fitting into the traditional classroom material delivery well entrenched in the university.

Dane-Staples (2013) builds off innovation in an approach to constructing the setup of a sports studies classroom. Dane-Staples focused on preparing doctoral candidates for teaching in the classroom. She proposed a series of activities to use in a learning setting. One of particular interest was the use of roaming PowerPoints. Under

this method students break into groups and create their own slides on the material (Dane-Staples, 2013). This could be applied to sports studies programs. By having students share their perspectives on the material, students can gain practical experience. The course material can symbolize a product for an organization. By presenting the material to the class, the students can simulate making a sales or sponsorship pitch to a client.

This creativity of Dane-Staples (2013) is further backed by one of Newman's (2014) theories. Newman is opposed to a business-first approach to learning and gravitates towards creativity and critical thinking. Newman theorizes that:

A business-first orientation might readily prepare students to enter the field as technocratic functionaries, ready to fill an existing industry need, but such proficiencies do not necessarily engender the creativity, criticality, and dialectical thinking necessary to bring about change within the industry. (p. 606)

By using Newman's (2014) theory, sports studies majors at JCU can have interactive classroom settings with seminar classes looking at case studies instead of traditional lectures. By examining case studies, students use creativity and critical thinking. This creativity and critical thinking will long-term lead to bringing about change within the industry. Sadler (2012) also found a trend to increase involvement of students in the classroom setting instead of just traditional lectures. Sadler suggested using more interactive strategies when student knowledge on the subject was high. This would be extremely beneficial for seniors who generally have a high level of academic knowledge. The seniors can take a seminar class to analyze situations in the industry and propose solutions in the classroom setting.

Bruening et al. (2014) centers their research on intergroup contact theory. The theory focuses on out-group relations amongst different racial and ethnic groups (Bruening et al., 2014). Bruening et al. looked at service learning in the Hartford, Connecticut area. The study found students had “increased empathy toward the out-group” and students had better perceptions of the out-group (Bruening et al., 2014, p. 41). This intergroup contact theory is important in sport for development. Therefore for institutions high on service learning like JCU, a sport for development class should be offered. This course should use intergroup contact theory to build relationships with out-groups.

One final strategy in setting up the classroom revolves around the actual schedule of classes. Horel et al. (2013) looked at this. While not from a sports studies perspective, this study is useful when setting up the schedule to best fit the students. The authors found having sequences of courses, more electives, and less prerequisites to be the most beneficial in better serving the needs of the students (Horel et al., 2013). This finding is important because a high number of prerequisites can detract from a major especially if the prerequisites could potentially impact the length of time needed to obtain the degree.

Networking was found to be of vital importance in the sports studies field (Cunningham et al., 2005; Odio et al., 2014). Networking involves making connections with those in the industry. It can be achieved through internships, volunteer opportunities, and student organizations comprised of sports studies majors.

Internships are vital in the field of sports studies as research by Cunningham et al. (2005) and Odio et al. (2014) showed. Internship programs often are the final experience of students prior to entering the field with their academic degree in hand (Odio et al.,

2014). However, Odio et al. looked at the impact of the internship in sport, rather than finding an internship. The findings from Odio et al. were particularly alarming. The research investigated reality checks of the participants and found three of the participants decided to leave their sport profession (Odio et al., 2014). Cunningham et al. complemented this finding by comparing noninterns to intern satisfaction of sports studies students. Cunningham et al. found noninterns had higher commitment, intentions, and satisfaction at both the original and second data collection. Interesting to note, the interns had lower satisfaction and commitment to the organization at the end of their internship then at the beginning (Cunningham et al., 2005). This is of concern because internship experiences leading to career path changes can affect the longevity of the sports studies program in the long run. If students opt to leave the field prior to graduation or very soon after it shows the academic program is not very successful. Further, evidenced by less satisfaction in the Cunningham et al. study, it is important to find good internship sites to place students. This component will be addressed in the public relations plan with more partnerships with area organizations.

Building off of this, Mathner and Martin (2012) looked at varying perceptions regarding employment opportunities between sports studies students and practitioners. The duo found sports studies students perceived less time to obtain entry-level employment in the field versus practitioners (Mathner & Martin, 2012). This is of concern. Practitioners know the industry norms as they are working in the field. Therefore, the findings of students' misperception of time to find entry-level employment further validates the need to have a successful and meaningful internship in the field. DeSensi et al. (1990) further validate the purposes of internships and networking. The

quartet found “sport management is a unique area of study and that knowledge in all aspects of sport is important” (DeSensi et al., 1990, p. 49). The authors (DeSensi et al., 1990) propose that an internship is important for networking in the industry and to obtain a more full understanding of the practical side of the field.

In addition to internships, experiential learning helps students network. Experiential learning involves using special projects to stimulate the real world environment in an academic setting. This process is used at both the University of Tennessee (Tennessee) (Hardin et al., 2013) and Georgia Southern University (Georgia Southern) (Dees and Hall, 2012). The two programs utilize a student club to have volunteer work experience for students in their programs (Dees and Hall, 2012; Hardin et al., 2013). Georgia Southern focused its student organization on baseball games on campus to provide practice in sport management and marketing (Dees and Hall, 2012). Meanwhile at Tennessee, the students put on camps for the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Tennessee Valley (Hardin et al., 2013). Additionally at Tennessee, the club brought in prominent figures in the industry to talk to aspiring students (Hardin et al., 2013). These experiential learning tools can enhance sports studies programs by giving students firsthand experience in planning and executing events in addition to researching why people attend sporting events on campus. These ideals contribute to networking as the students at Georgia Southern and Tennessee have to interact with attendees to baseball games and leaders in charitable organizations.

Linking Public Relations Strategy with the Research

Smith (2013) provides a public relations framework from which to build guidelines for future sports studies programs. This framework will be used later on in

this paper when guidelines and suggested recommendations for a public relations plan for sports studies programs are introduced. Before delving into the guidelines, Smith's model will be explained and tied back to research already presented in this paper where appropriate.

The first step in the Smith (2013) model looks at formative research in analyzing the situation, the organization, and the publics. Smith defines a situation as “a set of circumstances facing an organization” (p. 21). In the case at hand, the situation facing the sports studies major is attracting and then retaining students to ensure the longevity of the program. Smith next lays the framework for the organization noting it needs to “begin with a clear focus on what the organization is, does, and aspires to be” (p. 41). In the case at hand, the public relations plan will need to align with the mission of each specific institution adding a sports studies program. Thirdly, Smith looks at publics as people who share an interest. In relation to sports studies programs, the publics are the incoming students and future students down the road who will ensure the longevity of the program.

Next, Smith (2013) devotes his attention to the strategy. Smith recommends having a positioning statement, goals, and objectives. A positioning statement is “a general expression of how an organization wants its public to distinguish it from its competition” (Smith, 2013, p. 95). Goals are broad statements for how to resolve the situation while objectives are how the organization will get there. In the case at hand, the goal is the successful launching of a new sports studies major. To go about this, universities will look at the Hancock and Greenwell (2013) study, use the recommendations as to what courses to offer from the NASPE-NASSM Joint Task Force

on Sport Management Curriculum and Accreditation, and utilize the importance of networking.

Smith (2013) proposes a proactive and reactive strategy for developing a communication plan. The former, allows the organization to identify its own message strategy while the latter is a response to issues that come up (Smith, 2013). Based on the literature presented in this paper, future sports studies programs will need to have both proactive and reactive strategies in its plan. As a new major, the institutions can be proactive in releasing the information on its own schedule. However, with Cunningham et al. (2005) and Odio et al. (2014) both finding substantial concerns with lack of commitment and satisfaction at the end of the internship experiences of their sports studies student subjects, the necessity exists to have a reactive strategy in place to counter those findings. Therefore, the strategy will revolve around being proactive with communication and reactive when dealing with negative student internship experiences.

Smith (2013) continues with developing the message strategy as his next big theme. Two subsets of this notion from Smith are present in information and persuasion. When attracting students it is important as a university to persuade students to attend the program by presenting information. In the case at hand, a key for persuasion can be to following the models of Georgia Southern (Dees and Hall, 2012) and Tennessee (Hardin et al., 2013). By showing these student organizations exist and what they do, students can see the types of hands-on experience they can obtain as students in the program.

Smith (2013) then proposes implementing the strategic plan by utilizing various tactics. Two that apply in the design of an academic major are thinking creatively and putting the program together (Smith, 2013). Both are instrumental in the success of the

launching and sustaining a sports studies program. Universities must think creatively to attract students given the high market of other colleges throughout the country and must put the program together. This brings in the research, most specifically from the NASPE-NASSM Joint Task Force on Sport Management Curriculum and Accreditation (1993) about what programs should be offered and the two student organizations within sports studies programs at Georgia Southern (Dees and Hall, 2012) and Tennessee (Hardin et al., 2013). All three of these articles should be used as benchmarks by universities to consider what courses to offer and how to engage the students within the program.

Public Relations Guidelines

Two models of the public relations guidelines will now be offered for future universities who add sports studies program to consult. The first will be an elaborate version of guidelines. These guidelines will include some specific hypothetical ideas and will use JCU as an institution of reference where appropriate. The elaborate version will use the Smith (2013) model as the framework. The key sections just identified will each be expanded upon with recommendations and hypothetical ideas. Each institution's program will be structured differently. Therefore, some hypothetical ideas or guidelines may be appropriate for some institutions but not for others. After the elaborate version, a reference version will be offered in the form of an outline to highlight the key aspects and allow for quick execution of the recommendations.

The public relations guidelines will begin with an analysis of the situation, in this case the addition of the sports studies major. The institution of reference, JCU in this study, will be analyzed using a SWOT analysis. Four key publics to the success of the launching of a new major will be identified and analyzed. Publics are "groups of people

who share a common interest with an organization" (Smith, 2013, p. 484). Next, suggested goals and objectives for future sports studies program will be established. Tactics for attracting students, tactics for ensuring success, and tactics for adhering to institutional missions and tradition will be offered. The public relations plan will conclude with implementation steps to be taken on immediate, recurrent, and future bases. The outline of the guidelines will then be offered as a quick reference point. Finally, limitations to the public relations guidelines will be offered.

Analyzing the Situation

Institutions throughout the country continue to add sports studies as a major (Crosset & Hums, 2009). With this comes opportunities and obstacles (Smith, 2013). The new program is an opportunity to add to the diversity of the student population by attracting students who are interested in becoming sport managers, coaches, and wellness instructors. This is also an obstacle as it presents the challenges of hiring new industry qualified faculty and attracting students to have the major off the ground and running. At issue here, is the need to create hypothetical recommendations to market to new and future students to successfully build the program. Once the students are in the program, steps need to occur to keep the students enrolled in the major. At the same time, this plan may need to incorporate a service project given certain institutions' high commitment to service especially at Jesuit-based institutions.

Smith (2013) identifies environmental scanning as, "A process of seeking information about events and relationships in a company's outside environment," (p. 26). This step has already been taken at JCU in its partnership with NACDA, a prominent

Cleveland-based sports organization and Cleary, an alumnus of JCU. However, institutions should seek relationships with as many outside organizations as possible.

In the case of JCU, outside organizations to consider partnering with include the Greater Cleveland Sports Commission, the YMCA of Greater Cleveland, the JCU athletic department, area professional teams, and local high schools. These organizations are important to connect with due to the administration, coaching, and wellness tracks in the program mentioned earlier. As a partnership with NACDA already is forged, it is important to find organizations to do likewise with for the coaching and the health and wellness industry segments. Tactics listed further on in this plan will delve into more details about forging these relationships. These outside environments are crucial in ensuring students' success in the program.

Analyzing the Organization

Before really examining the tactics for the public relations plan, the necessity exists to conduct a SWOT analysis. Each institution should conduct a SWOT analysis prior to adding a new major. For the purposes of this paper, JCU and its new sports studies program will be used for the purposes of the SWOT analysis. The material in the SWOT analysis was derived from information on JCU's website, the author's knowledge of JCU and the Cleveland-area, and the author's experiences as a student in a sports studies program at a major public research institution. Everything presented in the SWOT analysis represents the view of the author.

Strengths. JCU has numerous strengths for the sports studies program. JCU is a top 10 institution in the U.S. News and World Report 2015 “Best Colleges” edition for universities in the Midwest offering master’s programs and “great schools, great prices.”

JCU is a top 20 institution for service. These strengths show a strong academic profile and a commitment to the Jesuit ideals. The latter will be further emphasized in the tactics offered later in this paper. JCU offers 23 varsity sports in the athletic department which present numerous chances for students to get involved and have hands-on experience in multiple elements of sports studies such as marketing, promotions, media relations, and sports medicine.

JCU's existing exercise science and physical education programs are a strength for the sports studies program. This is more prudent to the coaching and health and wellness tracks within the sports studies program. By already having exercise science and physical education programs, JCU has faculty members who can transfer their expertise over to the coaching and health and wellness courses within the sports studies program.

JCU alumni roles represent a strength of the educational value of the university. While not graduates of the sports studies program at JCU, these alums can be highlighted to show their successes. JCU has two current general managers in the National Football League. Additionally, two active coordinators in the league are alums of JCU. With the strength of high-profiled alums, the coaching track is appropriate for the program.

Weaknesses. The lack of an online presence presents a major weakness. This online presence can be further broken down into social media for the sports studies program and website information on the program. With demand for technology at an all-time high, the fact the sports studies program has no stand-alone social media presence is a weakness. While there is a website presence for the sports studies program at JCU, the visibility is lacking at best. No course descriptions are provided just simply a listing of the courses. Additionally, the sports studies program currently does not list all of the

faculty on its website (JCU, n.d.c). This is problematic as if the faculty are not in place, students may not come to the program. All faculty should be listed in an easy-to-find location with their particular areas of expertise noted.

The lack of classes in the proposed curriculum presents a potential problem. The JCU program sets up with 18 of the 39 semester hours taking business courses for the sports and athletic administration track (JCU, n.d.a). While business courses are important to be an administrator in sports, these courses have no sports application. Therefore, students might be better off majoring in business administration or marketing. For example, a comparison of the marketing major curriculum shows nine of the 15 hours for the sports and athletic administration track also apply to a marketing degree (JCU, n.d.g). If a prospective student were to major in marketing the degree would be more applicable. With a marketing degree, the student would be positioned to enter the marketing field in all facets of the industry. With a sports studies degree, the student would only be positioned to be in the sports industry since the degree is more industry specific. While a jump to a different industry is possible, it would be more difficult.

Contrasting another sport management program, the University of Louisville's (UofL) degree is more applicable to the industry. UofL has 48 credit hours of academic study devoted to sport management (University of Louisville, n.d.). These classes, such as sport finance, still provide the academic background as JCU's program with the accounting principles classes. The difference here is UofL's program takes all of the concepts and applies them to a specific industry, in this case, the sport administration field.

JCU's cost emerges as a big detractor to the sports studies program. JCU's cost is over \$48,000 to attend (JCU, n.d.e). With the high cost of attendance, students may be priced out of the program and university unless the students take out loans or earn scholarships.

Opportunities. Several key opportunities are present for JCU in terms of adding sports studies as a major. First and foremost, the program is named for Cleary, an alumnus of JCU who is the director emeritus of the National Association for Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA). The NACDA connection opens the door to students to potentially network and obtain internships with organizations belonging to NACDA. JCU sits in a market with professional sports teams (Cleveland Browns, Cleveland Cavaliers, Cleveland Gladiators and Cleveland Indians), professional organizations (Greater Cleveland Sports Commission), a college conference office (Mid-American Conference), and numerous sport industry segments (golf, sport merchandising, and sport sponsorship to name a few). These organizations can potentially represent more organizations with which to partner so the students within the program can have more internship opportunities available.

COSMA accreditation should be pursued by the JCU sports studies program. As many universities that offer sports studies programs that are not accredited, this would better position the program in the industry. The COSMA accreditation adds value to the program and the degree will carry more weight.

JCU has a history of alumni supporting current students and staff members with roles in organizations. This is an opportunity as those who graduated from JCU and have a prominent role in the industry can provide jobs for those currently at JCU. An example

of this happened recently. Tom Telesco, the general manager for the San Diego Chargers in the National Football League, recently hired Chris Shula as a quality control coach. Telesco is an alumnus of JCU and Shula had served as the defensive coordinator for the 2014 JCU football season. While not a sports studies example, this case shows an alumnus still being connected to the university and hiring those with ties from JCU.

Threats. A high level of competition poses a big threat to the success of the sports studies program at JCU. The NASSM directory lists 28 colleges and universities within Ohio who currently offer some form of sport management program (North American Society for Sport Management, n.d.). Further adding to this threat, three of the 36 programs accredited by COSMA (n.d.b) reside in Ohio. This poses a significant threat with JCU's program not having any current industry accreditation. Attending an accredited program further enhances the student's academic resume upon graduation.

Finally, JCU's recent accreditation situation presents perhaps the most substantial threat. JCU was placed on notice by the Higher Learning Commission Board of Trustees (HLC) in March. The board placed JCU on notice because of "concerns related to program quality, program review, assessment of student learning, financial management, shared governance, strategic planning, and systematic improvement" (Higher Learning Commission, 2015, para. 4).

This notice by the HLC presents a major threat to JCU moving forward. Should the situations cited by the organization not be addressed to their satisfaction in time, JCU is at danger of potentially losing its accreditation. The notice has the capability to severely affect students' college decisions. While the public disclosure notice means JCU is still accredited, the document provided by the HLC advises students to confirm other

institutions' transfer and admission policies as some institutions may not accept credits or degrees from universities on notice (Higher Learning Commission, 2015). Therefore, given that credits may not be valid at some other institutions, this presents a major threat.

Identifying the Publics

Four publics are key to the success of the sports studies major. Three of these publics will contribute to the success of the sports studies major in customers, producers, and enablers (Smith, 2013). The fourth, limiters (Smith, 2013) can both add and subtract value from the program.

Customers. Customers are those who use the product. In this case, the customers would be the potential students who will enroll in the sports studies major. Secondary customers could be viewed as parents and siblings. Parents oftentimes attend campus visits with their children and can help play a role in deciding on a college decision. Additionally, siblings, especially those younger than the prospective students, present an important secondary customer because they will eventually embark on a college search of their own. These customers will change over time as prospective students will become current students. Then the need will exist to keep those in the sports studies program satisfied so they do not drop out or switch majors.

Producers. Producers are those who provide the service or product (Smith, 2013). In the case of a sports studies program, the institution would be the producer. The product provided is the faculty teaching the academic material to the students. Additionally, the faculty advises the students on potential career paths. The money for the program would be provided by the students as well as donations to the institution. In the case of JCU, the school notes that “the University must rely on private gifts to enrich

the student experience” (JCU, n.d.d, para. 5). The producers have changed in recent times. For example, those providing the money have had to pay more. Using JCU as a reference, tuition has increased over \$15,000 since the 2003-05 undergraduate bulletin was published (JCU, n.d.f; JCU, n.d.g).

Enablers. Several enablers exist for the success of the sports studies program. Enablers set the norms or standards for the organization (Smith, 2013). Cleary and NACDA are both enablers specific to JCU's program. Cleary and NACDA have a partnership with the JCU sports studies major to connect students in the program to internship and job opportunities. Therefore, by having this partnership a standard for JCU's program could center on partnerships with elite, national organizations. Local publications and institutional social media platforms are also prudent here as enablers. Local publications and institutional social media platforms can help make the major a success by spreading word about the program (Smith, 2013). In the case of JCU, the JCU alumni magazine presents a second enabler as the magazine can talk about the program in its issues. The JCU social media accounts are available as a medium to the general public to highlight student and faculty accomplishments from the sports studies program. Depending on the level of success of the accomplishments, faculty can pitch story ideas to local media outlets including television stations and *The Plain Dealer*.

Finally, institutional enrollment and marketing offices are critical enablers. Both of these departments play key roles in influencing potential customers. Potential students oftentimes are bombarded with marketing materials on potential colleges. Thus, it is important for institutions adding sports studies as a major to have marketing materials that stand out to appeal to these potential students. These potential students interact

heavily with the enrollment office of institutions they are interested in attending.

Therefore, enrollment offices must be able to answer all questions thoroughly and accurately.

Limiters. Limiters detract from or undermine the success of an organization (Smith, 2013). Current and former students at a college adding a sports studies program are a potential limiter. Regardless of major, if a student did not have a good college experience may try to dissuade students from coming to a particular university. A high level of competition from other colleges offering sports studies exists. In the case of JCU the institution is competing with 28 colleges and universities in Ohio alone with similar programs.

Establishing Goals and Objectives

An institution adding sports studies as a major will need to establish a positioning statement to distinguish itself from the highly competitive academic field given the large volume of colleges offering sports studies programs across the country. A sample positioning statement could be: "Through partnerships with elite, national organizations and local sport organizations, students in the program will gain a competitive advantage to better position themselves to succeed in the sporting industry." Each institutions positioning statement will be different based on institutional goals and philosophies. This positioning statement could work for an institution in a large city. This statement first highlights partnerships a university may have. Using JCU as a reference here, the partnership would refer to NACDA. Using this as a positioning statement for a university in a major city, this statement would highlight the high volume of sport organizations in the area. Thirdly, by expanding the partnerships to more organizations,

students will have a more competitive advantage in other industry segments besides administration. In the case of JCU, this positioning statement would work. This positioning statement expands into partnerships in the coaching and wellness segments of their program. Since coaching and wellness are both tracks in JCU's program, it is important for JCU to find organizations to partner with for these tracks rather than just limit the opportunities for students to sport administration.

Institutions adding sports studies programs needs to establish a series of goals to ensure the successful launch and longevity of the program. Three goals will be proposed for institutions to use as a guideline. The first is to match changing needs of students with new major offerings. The second is to provide tools to ensure the students success. The third goal is to adhere to the mission of each institution.

These three goals have specific purposes. The first is to attract students to the program hence the launch of the new major. With this comes the need to retain the students after they enroll, which is why the second goal relates to ensuring success of the current students. Without a sufficient number of students in a program, a major has little chance for survival. Finally, it is important to have a goal to encourage community service in the program. Using JCU as an example, this goal would need to tie into Jesuit service-based learning since JCU is a Jesuit institution.

Numerous objectives need to be established to obtain these goals. The first set of objectives relates to the number of students in the program. Each sports studies program will need to determine an appropriate number of students to target for the first academic year of the program. Given each institution has different enrollment figures, this number will fluxgate from university to university. Each university will need to establish long-

term enrollment goals. It is important to have a short-term enrollment number to have adequate student enrollment in the program to be off the ground and running. At the same time, institutions need to plan long-term in relation to enrollment. Moderate growth is important in this aspect. A program growing too quickly could potentially lead to a lack of faculty to teach the classes or a lack of seats in classes that are required to graduate. This sets the students back potentially keeping them at the university an extra semester.

When establishing tools for student success, universities should use the models set forth by Georgia Southern and Tennessee. While specific tactics on how to utilize these models at future programs are forthcoming, student involvement should increase moderately in this facet as well. Additionally, sports studies programs should partner with additional organizations in their respective markets to create standing internship roles for students. By having these internship positions created already, professors can mention to incoming students which organizations have opportunities for them down the road to gain valuable experience. This student organization is important to have at the start of the program to best position the students for success in the industry. The Georgia Southern and Tennessee models were both chosen to combine elements from their programs into a well-rounded guidelines for future universities adding sports studies programs to use.

These institutions should partner with varsity athletic teams to add student manager roles for those interested in coaching. Additionally, universities should partner with a high school to enable students to gain experience in coaching by serving as volunteer varsity assistant coaches. Sports studies programs should also partner with

their local YMCA to create internship opportunities for those interested in health and wellness. Both of these partnerships are critical to the success of the program. In the case of JCU's program, Cleary primarily focuses his career on administration in athletics. At the same time it is important to note the other two tracks in JCU's program. These new partnerships will fulfill the internship needs students will have in the other two program tracks.

Finally, by adhering to the institutional missions, the sports studies program should add a sport for development class with an immersion trip. In the case of a service-based learning institution like JCU, this would be appropriate to tie into the Jesuit mission. This needs to be more of a long-term objective, to enable proper time and planning for the immersion trip.

Tactics for Attracting Students

Numerous tactics can attract students to an institution to major in sports studies. The tactics for attracting students range from formulating the action strategy, the message strategy, and the selection of communication tactics. As a new major, sports studies should be emphasized more than the other majors on campus visits. As part of campus visits, all students should be informed specifically about the sports studies major being added as some may not be aware of it. If students are interested in exploring more about the major, the coordinators of the campus visits should direct the prospective students to a faculty member in the department. However, the faculty members of the sports studies program need to coordinate with the admissions department. This need is crucial because schedules can be hard to match if students visit when the faculty are unavailable. The

admissions counselors need to be able to answer this information instead of having the prospective student searching for the information on their own.

Secondly, preview days attract numerous potential students to an institution. In the case of JCU, the institution has a Junior Open House. In JCU's case, Cleary should be present at Junior Open Houses and give a presentation about the major at lunch. Since Cleary is an alumnus of JCU, the namesake of the program, and has had prominent roles over the course of his career in the sporting industry, it is critical for him to be present. Having Cleary at the Junior Open Houses would be beneficial to the prospective students and would carry more weight than a professor talking about the sports studies program. Cleary can elaborate on how his JCU education helped to launch a career leading to a top-level position at a national organization in the field. Institutions adding sports studies as a major should identify a key alumnus to act in this role.

Institutions scheduling an information night for current students would be beneficial to attracting current students to the new program. By having an information night, institutions can attract current students who are undecided on their major, are thinking about changing majors, or looking to double-major. Again in JCU's case, Cleary should be present at this event since his presence would carry substantial weight in persuading students to enroll in sports studies. This information night is crucial since it enables the program to attract non-freshmen and not have an entire program of all first-year students. By having variety in the program in terms of student makeup, sports studies faculty and admissions staff will not have to put as much effort into recruiting students. This would come into play should the major decide to cap enrollment down the road. By having upperclassmen in the program from the get-go, the program size in

terms of admittance year will have a more balanced look over a program with all large contingent of students in the same academic year.

In JCU's case, Cleary, when available, should make appearances at high schools with the admissions staff. This presence can help further engage the prospective students. His presence would advocate for the program as he would be able to give first-hand insight into the industry. When Cleary is not available, faculty or students in the program should make an effort to attend. While this will not happen on all high school visits due to availability or the cost of traveling out of town, this is important. The faculty and current students can better advocate for the sports studies program than admissions staff because current students can provide first-hand experiences of their time at JCU which carries more meaning than being listed on a brochure.

Smith (2013) notes sponsorships should be a part of the action plan. In the instance of JCU's sports studies program, the partnership with NACDA serves as the sponsorship. A long-term plan needs to be established to show the benefits of this partnership. Future universities adding sports studies as a program should list where students obtain internships they receive through their institutions partnerships. This will show these partnership really do help establish connections between the institution's students and companies in the industry. By having this information listed on the institution's website, potential students can see where current students found internships and graduates found jobs. While success stories (JCU, n.d.c) are currently listed on the sports studies section of the JCU website, these stories will need to be replaced with students who majored in the program. Since the program is new, if these success stories are not replaced once alums are working in the industry with sports studies degrees, it

will devalue the major. Students will figure out they could obtain a business management degree which would be more applicable should a career change be in order down the road. This is further evidenced by the current success stories on the sports studies webpage having high-ranking positions in the industry without a sports studies degree from JCU. For the time being, it is appropriate to list students working in the industry regardless of their major because it shows alums working in the field.

Additionally, institutions adding sports studies as a major should partner with their athletic departments to promote the major. This partnership ties back to interest in the field as the number one factor for students selecting sports studies as a major (Hancock & Greenwell, 2013). Given students are looking to play competitively at the collegiate level, these prospects have an interest in sport. Therefore, coaches within the athletic department should be sure to talk about the sports studies program with potential recruits, especially the ones who are not completely set on their major. Coaches represent a key recruiter for potential student-athlete. Coaches often have frequent contact with potential student-athletes, especially ones they are interested in having on their teams.

Alumni magazines represent a key vehicle of information to spread word about a new major. In the case of JCU, the sports studies program should seek a follow up article in the alumni magazine. The alumni magazine published a feature story on Cleary in its Fall 2014 edition (Walsh, 2014). While the article does mention the program being established, JCU should run a follow up article with the department chair on how the major is shaping up. This will enable alumni to be more informed and show active communication on the part of JCU, a recommendation put forth by Smith (2013). By

having this follow up article, JCU caters to alums who may now have children and are thus potential students. Alums in this case become free marketing for JCU. If an alumnus knows a student looking at a sports studies program, he or she would be able to advocate for JCU if they had a good experience as a student.

Institutions adding sports studies need to create a major-specific rack card. This card will provide specific information about the major. These rack cards can be displayed throughout campus because this will cater to those who are undecided on a major or might be interested in changing majors. Additionally, recruiters and admission staff can take these rack cards to high schools to hand out at collegiate fairs. Finally, these rack cards can be passed out as part of the information packets students receive on campus visits.

As sports studies is a new major, it is essential for the program to have a stand-alone rack card. Sports studies needs to recruit potential students at a more pressing clip than other well-established majors at their particular institutions. Therefore, by having a stand-alone rack card, the sports studies major can display more information. If the program relied on generic institutional rack cards, the information would get lost as the university would most likely highlight the rankings of the school over promoting certain majors. Sports studies programs need to make sure these rack cards stay up-to-date and put internship opportunities on them. Internship opportunities are important to list because it provides a quick reference to prospective students as to what positions the students can land in the industry.

New sports studies programs need to establish a strong online presence from the get-go. Course descriptions should be provided on the sports studies home page as the

average prospective student would not know where to look in the online schedule of classes. Additionally, the sports studies major should have a stand-alone Facebook page and Twitter account to provide updates about the program. This is important as social media is critical in today's day and age. By having stand-alone accounts, the sports studies major can post major specific content rather than relying on the university accounts to provide the information on a more limited basis. A full-time professor will need to be assigned to monitor the interactions on the accounts in order to provide timely, accurate information from those wanting more information on the program.

The sports studies program will use social media to announce where graduates land jobs in the industry and where current students secure internships and volunteer opportunities. This is important because potential students will want to see what they can do with the sports studies degree. While this information is also on the rack card, it is important to repeat the information across multiple mediums to account for all possible places prospects may turn for information on a particular program.

To best position the students academically, new programs should setup their course offerings like UofL's model described earlier. This model has classes that all have a sport focus. JCU should switch its program setup to UofL's in respect to course offerings. These classes with a sport focus will replace the business courses needed to graduate with a degree in the program. The switching of courses in the program adds value to the degree. Students will now have classroom experience with sport finance rather than just generic finance. The switch better positions the program because students will be exposed to more industry-specific examples in the classroom that can then be

taken and applied in the field. While a generic finance class would work, a sport finance class is more appropriate in the field given the examples covered in class.

Universities adding sports studies as a major need to make sure adequate faculty are in place prior to offering courses. These faculty need to have varying industry experience. Specifically, at least one of the faculty members should have industry experience in the health and wellness segment. The importance of faculty with sport industry experience is crucial for the success of the program. By having industry specific classes, the need exists for faculty members who can adequately teach the material to the students.

Tactics for Ensuring Success

Once students are enrolled in the program, it is essential for the respective universities to look out for their students' continued success. Sports studies programs should look to establish a student organization. This organization will mold itself like the Georgia Southern and Tennessee examples presented earlier in this paper. These student organizations should have a guest speaker once a month where prominent leaders in the local sports scene will come in and present to the group. These presentations will cover background about the organization, the speaker's role within the organization, and tools for rising into top executive roles in the industry.

The establishment of this student organization is crucial to the success of the program at multiple levels. First, this student organization enables students within the program to bond together to help each other's careers advance. Second, it enables students to hear from those in the industry and learn what it takes to secure a job. Finally,

these talks can show positions not necessarily associated with sports studies such as sponsorship activation.

Additionally, once a semester these student organizations should tour a sports facility near their respective campuses to learn about management of the facility and the challenges that come with the responsibilities. Sports studies programs could travel to Indianapolis and visit the headquarters of the National Collegiate Association of Athletics (NCAA). This will enable students to learn about the inner workings of the NCAA and ask questions of the high-level managers about careers in intercollegiate athletics. This needs to be a long-term trip to enable the students ample time to raise funds for the trip, ensure seamless planning on the part of the faculty, and allow the students in the program to have a few years of education undertaken rather than have a group of freshmen who may not be in the best position to enter the industry.

These site visits are important in keeping students enrolled in the sports studies program. The facility tours expose students to some of the challenges of facility upkeep and offer exposure to another side of the sport industry. By attending these visits, students can network with those already in the industry to perhaps be in a better position to land an internship or entry level job. Finally, it enables new sports studies programs to get their names out in the industry as having a new program of academic study.

As part of these student organizations, students will need to embark on projects to gain hands-on experience; therefore, membership will not be restricted to sports studies majors. Due to the potential lack of enrollment in the program, keeping these student organizations open to all majors allows for a larger body of students to execute on the projects and to attend the meetings with industry leaders. New sports studies programs

needs to show they are committed to having students attend when speakers are brought in to talk to the group. By having a broader pull, attendance will be higher.

This student organization should take over operations of the student spirit initiatives at schools where one exists or establish one if a university's athletic department has no current student spirit group. The goal of this student spirit initiative is to entice students to come to the sporting events at a particular college. By working to increase student attendance at sporting events, sports studies students will be able to gain experience in both a practical and academic setting. Students will have the practical application of having to partner with community-based organizations to obtain donations or at-cost prizes for contests at athletic events. This will give students practice in budgeting and marketing plans. The members of the student organization will need to adhere to the amount of money provided by the athletic department and persuade local businesses to sponsor halftime contests. From the academic side, students will have the opportunity to conduct surveys and study why students do or do not attend certain sporting events and develop a plan to entice more students to attend the games.

By having a group committed to enhancing student spirit at athletic contests, the opportunity exists for higher attendance. This student organization can arrange promotions for all sports. In the case of JCU, this enables JCU's athletic department to build up more excitement especially when crosstown rivals Baldwin Wallace and Mount Union are playing JCU teams in more sports than just football and basketball.

Projects within classes can contribute to the students' success in the classroom. Sadler (2012) and Newman (2014) propose interactive learning in their research. This can be accomplished by having a marketing class run the athletic community days.

These community days are designed to bring community groups and companies into one football and one basketball game. By having the class run these days as a project, the students will receive hands on experience with marketing and promotions. The students will have to market the event to local businesses and community groups. The sports studies students will work with the organizations in order to come up with a promotional plan for the select game.

This event is beneficial to both sports studies students and the athletic department. The students benefit from having a hand in an actual promotional event while at the same time having less pressure of it occurring in an academic setting. The athletic department benefits from the partnership by having a student group work to enhance an event that is oftentimes overlooked due to other more pressing responsibilities of the employees in the department.

Partnerships with area sport organizations will lead to success for the students in sports studies programs. In the case of JCU, the program should establish partnerships with the Greater Cleveland Sports Commission and one of the professional sports teams in Cleveland. By having these partnerships, JCU could establish internship positions with both the Greater Cleveland Sports Commission and the professional sports team. While these internships would be a semester in length, the model would be set up like the NBC/JCU *Meet The Press* Fellowship. The fellowship is a standing nine-month position awarded to a graduating senior at JCU (JCU, n.d.b). By having internship positions created for JCU students, this would better position the program as it would enable JCU to have measureable experiences to update the success stories on the website.

Adhering to the coaching track, a partnership with the institution's athletic department is vital to the success of the students. This partnership will seek to expose students in the major to the operations side of coaching. The sports studies major will work to create student manager positions with the varsity athletic teams in the athletic department. Since coaching involves more than game planning these positions are critical. Students will be able to get first-hand experience in planning the logistics of road trips, recruiting, and other day-to-day operations outside of practice and competition. To accomplish this, coaches will talk to the classes at the beginning of each semester to tell students about opportunities with their teams in a student manager capacity. Coaches will also present their opportunities at institution-wide preview days. By waiting to talk to the students at the beginning of the semester, coaches are in a prime position to attract student managers. Students, especially freshmen, will be looking for ways to become involved on campus.

Continuing with the coaching track, a program adding a sports studies major should partner with an area high school. This partnership will enable students to get a more hands-on experience in coaching as their duties would be assisting with practice and game strategy. An experience with a high school differs from a collegiate athletic department because this experience enables students interested in coaching to have a minor role in the actual execution of a game plan. Whereas at a college, the roles of the students would be more focused on the logistics of running a team.

Students who are interested in pursuing the health and wellness segment should be put in touch the local YMCA. This will enable the students to have the opportunity to land internship and volunteer experiences in the industry. The YMCA was chosen given

its status as a national organization. The national organization in the fitness industry is important as it ties back to the proposed model positioning statement to better position the students to succeed in all three tracks of the program.

Finally, a formal internship application process needs to be constructed. This notion ties back to the research from Cunningham et al. (2005) and Odio et al. (2014) in relation to motivation and satisfaction. Sports studies programs will need to track where students are working for all internship experiences, not just ones for credit. If trends become evident of a non-beneficial internship experience to the students in a particular sports studies program, the faculty will then be able to offer more caution to future students about particular internship sites. On the flip side, if an organization provides to be a substantially positive experience for a particular institution's students, the sports studies faculty should look to place more students with that particular organization.

Adhering to Institutional Mission.

Sports studies programs need to account for their respective institutional mission. JCU will be used as an example for this section given its standing as a Jesuit institution. A sport for development course should be offered at JCU to adhere to the Jesuit ideals. This course will conclude with an immersion trip to El Salvador. As part of this course, students will work to develop a game plan to introduce the game of basketball to the underprivileged in El Salvador. This course will serve several purposes. First, it will support the research by Sadler (2012) and Newman (2014) to foster an interactive learning environment as students will have to plan and execute a week long introduction to basketball camp. It will adhere to JCU's strong commitment to service as the camp will be serving a population in need. Additionally, the students will help build a

gymnasium as part of the initiative which will provide recreation for those in El Salvador. Finally, it will support the ideal of being men and women for others by helping those in need. This course will also give students practical experience in a non-traditional sports setting overseas.

Implementing the Plan

Numerous steps need to occur in order to secure the successful implementation of these public relations guidelines. This stage is critical in the process as it involves identifying who is carrying out the tactics. The three stages of implementation are immediate, ongoing, and future.

Immediate action steps. Sports studies programs can begin immediately updating their online presence. Course descriptions can be added into the curriculum on the sports studies pages so prospective students can see a full glimpse of what they will be learning. This task will be completed by the webmaster for the sports studies part of the website. The Facebook and Twitter accounts can be launched and updated with content on the program and should be monitored by a full-time faculty member in the sports studies department. If the information is not readily available by the announcement of the new major, the students may no longer consider the program. In JCU's case, the faculty in the program need to check for Cleary's availability during the junior preview day. If Cleary is not available, the faculty should make a point to attend the preview day or have strong student representation.

The faculty in the program need to work tirelessly to establish partnerships with area organizations in the sport industry. In the case of JCU, Cleary can be used as a major advocate in this facet. Cleary's role in the establishment of the partnership is to

carry the prestige necessary to ensure the successful implementation especially with national organizations. Partnerships are of great importance to accomplish immediately because with the successful securement of these opportunities, these internships can be mentioned to prospective students right away.

The sports studies faculty can converse with admissions staff to obtain a listing of upcoming high school visits. This information can then be used to plan out which local sites faculty and students will be able to attend. This task will be completed by faculty and students. Therefore, a meeting will need to happen in order for high school visits to be assigned.

The sports studies faculty needs to schedule a meeting with the athletic department in order to determine which of the varsity sports teams will have student manager roles for the students in the program. This meeting is important to have now because if the teams are interested in having student managers, it gives the coaches ample time to plan out the duties involved.

Ongoing action plan. The faculty in the sports studies program needs to establish a relationship with the integrated marketing communication (IMC) department on campus. As each new partnership is created, the rack card will need to be updated by the IMC department. As a new major, the rack card needs to be kept current with the latest partnerships for internships and the latest student success stories in order to attract future students.

As part of the ongoing plan, a representative from the student organization and the athletic department need to meet on a bi-weekly basis. This is crucial because it enables the athletic department to be aware of what the student organization has planned for

promotions for the upcoming two weeks. This also creates the need for the student organization to continuously solicit prizes from area businesses for the promotional contests.

The sport for development immersion trip is part of the ongoing action plan. A committee to plan the logistics is essential. This committee should consist of a full-time sports studies faculty member, two students, and a full-time faculty member with experience in planning an immersion trip. It is important to have both faculty and students involved in planning this trip. This immersion experience is part of the ongoing action plan because it involves having to plan a trip from scratch including fundraisers so the students will not have to pay as much.

A faculty member needs to be appointed as the internship coordinator. This faculty member will be in charge of logging the internship experiences of students, both those for and not for credit. This faculty member will need to perform site visits to help analyze if the organizations are good fits for students in the program. Additionally, this faculty member will be in charge of assessing the students' internship experiences to best match future students down the road.

Future action plans. Once students obtain internships and jobs in the field, the website coordinator for the sports studies pages on the particular institution's website will need to list these experiences in a timely manner. This is crucial as being a new major, timeliness is of the essence in keeping all of the information accurate on the website.

Additionally, the sports studies faculty need to plan quarterly meetings with the editor of the university's alumni magazine. These meetings will be crucial to getting word out to alums of a particular institution about the new program. These meetings will

help establish key new information about the program to be communicated in the magazine.

Regarding the student organization, the sports studies faculty must lineup the speakers for the fall semester over the summer. This is crucial because it enables a solid plan to be in place at the start of the semester as to who the speakers are. The facility visit to an area sports facility should also be booked and transportation to and from the venue planned. The sports studies faculty will need to start brainstorming fundraisers for the students in the organization to execute for the trip to the NCAA headquarters. While this trip is not upcoming immediately, the program will need to start to plan fundraisers now to cut down on student costs for the excursion.

Once the spring sports season is over, the sports studies faculty will need to meet with the athletic department to discuss the involvement of new student spirit initiative. This is important because it enables the athletic department and faculty of the program to engage in a seamless transition from the current set up of volunteer students working with the athletic department. It is important for this to wait until the summer so more focus can be given by the athletic department to establishing the partnership since the teams will not be in action.

Over the summer, the faculty in the program and athletic department need to plan out measurable criteria for the community day project to be completed by the marketing classes. This is essential because since it will be for a grade, there needs to be a clear rubric on how the event will be graded.

Outline of Public Relations Plan

SPORTS STUDIES PUBLIC RELATIONS PLAN

I. Analyzing

A. Situation

1. Need to create a plan to market to both new and future students
2. Partnership with industry organizations

B. SWOT Analysis (JCU as case study)

1. Strengths

- a. U.S. News and World Report rankings
- b. 23 varsity sports
- c. Alumni roles in industry

2. Weaknesses

- a. Lack of online presence
- b. Lack of classes in proposed curriculum
- c. JCU's cost

3. Opportunities

- a. NACDA connection
- b. JCU's location to other prominent organizations
- c. COSMA accreditation

4. Threats

- a. Similar programs in the area
- b. Higher Learning Commission Notice

C. Publics

1. Customers

- a. Potential students

- b. Parents and siblings
 - c. Current students
- 2. Producers
 - a. Institution
 - b. Faculty
 - c. Studnets/Donors
- 3. Enablers
 - a. Prominent alumnus
 - b. Prominent national organization
 - c. Local publications
 - d. Institutional social media accounts
 - e. Admissions and marketing staff
- 4. Limiters
 - a. Former students
 - b. Other colleges

II. Establishing goals and objectives

A. Positioning statement

- 1. Partnership with elite, national organizations
- 2. High volume of sporting organizations
- 3. Position students to succeed

B. Goals

- 1. Attract students to program
- 2. Ensure students in position to succeed

3. Adhere to institutional missions

C. Objectives

1. Short-term enrollment numbers
2. Long-term enrollment numbers
3. Short-term student organization numbers
4. Long-term student organization numbers
5. Partnership with local sport industry organizations
6. Partner with university athletic department
7. Partner with a high school to provide coaching opportunities
8. Partner with YMCA
9. Add sport for development class

III. Tactics

A. Attracting new students

1. Emphasize sports studies more on campus visits
2. Junior preview day
3. Information night for current students
4. Appearances at high schools
5. Listing of where students obtain internships
6. Athletic department partnership
7. Follow up articles in alumni magazine
8. Sport studies rack card
9. More online presence
10. More classes with a sport industry focus

B. Ensuring success

1. Student organization
 - a. Guest speaker once a month
 - b. Sports facility tour once a semester
 - c. Visit to NCAA
 - d. In charge of student spirit
2. Classroom learning
 - a. Marketing class running community days
3. Partnerships
 - a. Local organizations
 - b. Professional teams
 - c. Athletic department
 - d. YMCA

C. Institutional mission

1. Sport for development course
2. Immersion trip to El Salvador
3. Measurable grading criteria for community day events

IV. Implementing

A. Immediate steps

1. Updated online presence
2. Creation of social media accounts
3. Assessing prominent alums availability
4. Partnerships

5. Planning of upcoming high school visits
6. Work to determine student manager roles in athletic department

B. Ongoing steps

1. Rack card
2. Bi-weekly meetings between student organization and athletic department
3. Immersion trip

C. Future steps

1. Web updates with jobs and internships of students
2. Quarterly meetings with alumni magazine staff

Limitations

These public relations guidelines for the sports studies programs have several limitations. First, each institution's actual plan will differ. With that, these guidelines are only hypothetical in nature. For example, the partnership with NACDA is specific to JCU given the location of both organizations. Secondly, once a program is actually launched the entire public relations plan for a particular university may need to be reworked. This is crucial as certain recommendations may work for one program while others may not be applicable given the direction of the program once students begin taking classes in the major. Finally, the author is a student of the university in study. This is a limitation as a conflict of interest could potentially arise.

Conclusion

This document sought to identify a public relations guidelines for new sports studies programs. By using these recommendations, the hope is that the sports studies programs will be in position to succeed and thrive when launched. Recommendations

were offered in the areas of attracting new students, ensuring the success of current students, and adhering to institutional missions. These recommendations were based on a thorough analysis of adding a major using JCU's model as an example where appropriate. The recommendations were also derived from the literature review. This review included a look at why students chose certain majors and a thorough analysis of literature in the field of sports studies. The biggest challenge going forward is defining a universal plan to attracting students to a sports studies major.

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