

Leveraging an experiential learning program through the 2016 Final Four and 2017 Super Bowl



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Purpose

➤ Overall Goal

- Report and discuss how an EL program leveraged (or not) a tripartite relationship

➤ Specific Objectives

1. Report practical and theoretical outcomes of the Super Four program
2. Provide recommendations
3. Encourage program collaboration and resource sharing



Experiential Learning (EL) Critical

- **Academics**: COSMA (2016) core principals suggest integrative learning and building industry linkages
 - 77% of sport mgt programs contain EL component (Schoepfer & Dodds, 2010)
 - Experiential Learning Theory and Human Development & Learning research is robust (Kolb, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978)
- **Employers**: experience and skill enhancement, cheaper labor, and relationships (Petersen & Pierce, 2009; Sotiriadou, 2011; Williams, 2004)
- **Students**: 41% of graduates are underemployed and working in jobs not of their college degrees; 56.5% of interns get full-time offers (National Association of Colleges and Employers[NACE], 2013)
- *We understand it's value potential, both in theory and practice*

But “How” EL is delivered....

- Determines its outcomes and value (Barnes, 2014; Brandon-Lai, Armstrong, Bunds, 2016)

Various Factors and Challenges to Overcome:

- Different types and settings of EL opportunities (Cunningham et al., 2005)
- Gaps in perceptions and expectations vs. reality (Mathner & Martin, 2012; Sotiriadou, 2011)
- Lack of clear strategic decision making tools (Odio, Sagas, & Kerwin, 2014)
- Meaning of experience and time are still under-researched factors EL design (Walsh, 2017)
- Quality depends on academics', practitioners', and students' appreciation and role in EL scope, conditions, and coordination (Brandon-Lai, Armstrong, Bunds, 2016; Kelley, 2004; Orrell, Cooper, & Jones, 1999)

What is an optimal design?

What does “it” look like?

- COSMA Manuals
- Foster & Dollar's (2010) 5-Step Model
- Conferences/Teaching Fairs
- Peer Networking

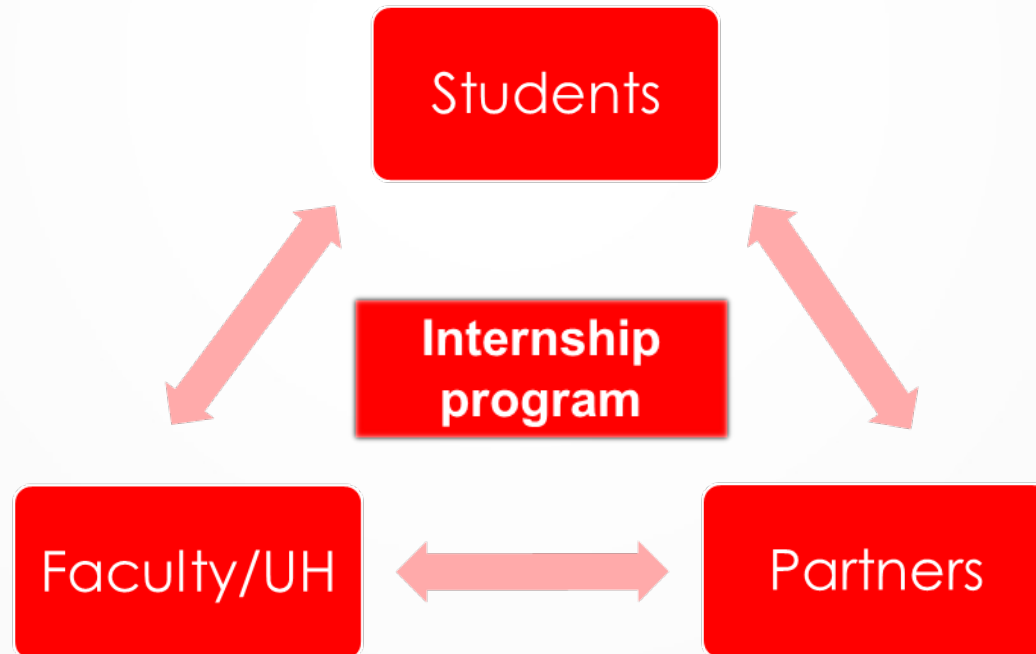
Design is difficult to assess, clear need for....

- Best practices for EL
- Easier accessibility
- Better collaboration
- Validation from research



Assess a "Tripartite" Interdependency Design

- Mutual benefits leveraged by the internship (or EL program) are key to design *(Cuneen 2004; Cunningham et al., 2005; Sotiriadou, 2011; Taylor, 2001; Verner, Keyser, & Morrow, 2001)*





Interdependency Benefits

- **University/Faculty:** increases exposure, cultivates contacts, improves teaching methods and curriculum, bridges the gap between practice and theory
- **Students:** enhances employability, transferable skills, vocational clarity, and enthusiasm for learning
- **Partners:** recruitment and retention of trained workers, inexpensive labor, increases labor efficiencies, and provides training ground and pre-employment evaluation
- *(Cunningham et al., 2005; Kerka, 1999; Sotiriadou, 2011; Stratta, 2004)*

The “Super Four” Program



- Final Four and Super Bowl
- 41 students selected
- Sport Admin and HRM Students
- Combined classroom and practical projects
- Event mgt., vol. mgt., guest services, finance, marketing, sponsorship, law, risk mgt.
- Many EL-type assignments



2017 Spring



2016 Fall



2016 Spring



2015 Fall

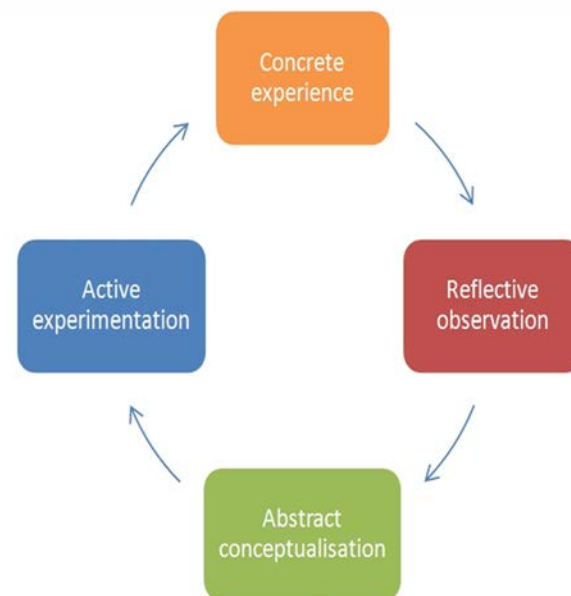
Evaluative Frame: *Practical and Theoretical*

1. **Practical**: Design criteria are still needed with specific details or “best practices” to ensure quality (Kelley, 2004; COSMA, 2017)

- Used Walsh’s (2014) 13 “best practices” as checkpoints
- Inspired by work from Kelley (2004), Chouinard (1993), Stratta (2004), colleagues, COSMA and my own practical experiences

2. **Theoretical**: Kolb’s EL Theory

- Theory to practice integration
- Assignments reflected theory
- Longitudinal Research Design



"Best Practices" Quality Checkpoints (Walsh, 2014)

1. Develop internship handbook and website
2. Obtain funding mechanisms
3. Promote student collaboration and *esprit de corps* (create own events, volunteering, "pre-internships" etc.)
4. Deepen relationship with career services/on-campus resources
5. Hold mock interview panels & replicate hiring process
6. Develop resume/personal website workshops
7. Formulate guest speaker lineups with practitioners
8. Showcase intern work via website/blogs/social media
9. Hold or actively engage in career fairs
10. Develop recognition structure for students
11. Class project integration with practitioners
12. Undergrad/grad research involvement
13. Increase sport teams or org. site endorsements for branding

(Chouinard, 1993; COSMA, 2014; Cuneen, 2004; Kelley, 2004; Stratta, 2004; Light & Dixon, 2007; Mathner & Martin, 2012; Sotiriadou, 2011; University of Texas, 2014)

Practical Results

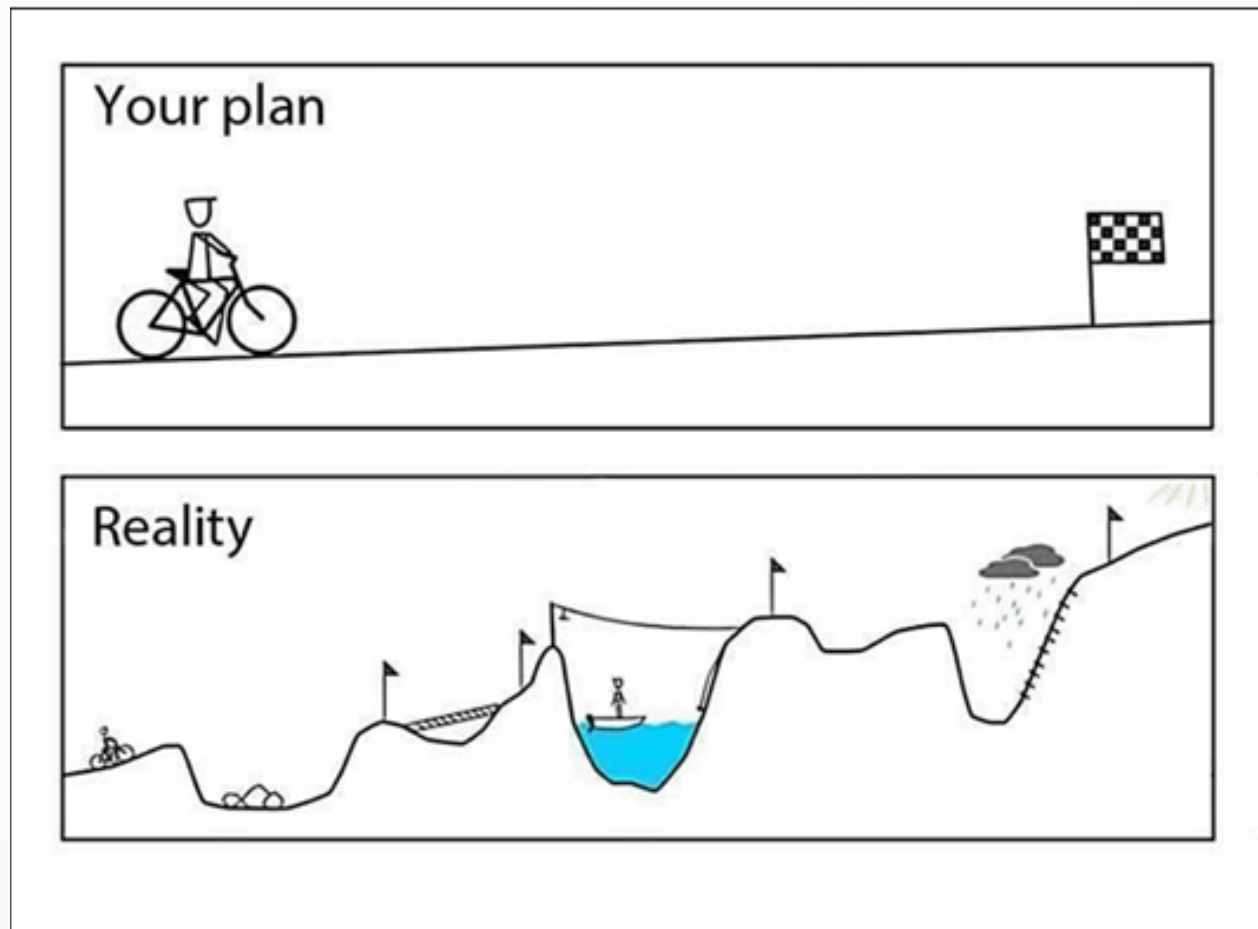
- All but 1 (#9-Career Fair) of the “best practices” were sufficiently accomplished
- **Examples:**
 - Point 2: \$25,000 funding for program
 - Point 12: Two-year longitudinal research study assess student learning
 - Point 5: Students interviews with the NFL, NCAA, & LOC
 - Points 3, 8, 11: Student centered initiatives and programs with orgs.
 - Point 13: NCAA now mandates EL component in all future FF Bids
 - **Hunter Yurachek, Former AD of U of H, Current AD of Univ. of Arkansas**
 - *“The Houston LOC will be submitting a bid to host the Final Four in future years and based on the success of UH’s “Super Four” course, the NCAA has now mandated that a similar academic component is a part of the host institution’s bid. ” (Oct. 27, 2017)*
 - **Doug Hall VP, Harris County Houston Sports Authority**
 - *“One of the key elements the NCAA has asked us to provide is Host Institution involvement, specifically academic support. See the second attachment. Our Super Four Course with UH during the 2016 event was very successful and helped us meet this criteria before it was formally mandated.” (Oct. 26, 2017)*

Research & Theoretical Results

- **RQ:** How do student' meaning of their experience impact their learning process over time?
- **Longitudinal, hermeneutic phenomenology** (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; van Manen, 1997)
- **N=45 (interviews)**
- **Five Themes Uncovered Importance of Time and Meaning**
 - (1) *Sense of being blind (to new experiences), (2) Actually do it to see it, (3) Out of comfort zone, (4) Must figure it out*
 - (5) *Roller Coaster Experience (holistic meaning)*
 - [Roller Coaster Video](#)



Conceptual Interpretation



Theoretical Discussion

► “Embrace the Roller Coaster Ride of EL”

1. Shows HOW meaning impacts Kolb’s modes and HOW student inter-subjectivity impacts the learning process
 - Build in reflexive exercises during EL
 - Student-to-student collaboration enhances learning
2. Time shows us that struggles in learning are essential to student development... “embrace the gaps”
 - Real-world experimentation with theoretical concepts and practical templates...embrace “trial by error” approach
 - Design support network or mentoring sources for the “struggles”
3. Unpack the nuances of “experience” ...subjective and objective are integrated...design should impact both objective and subjective realms
 - Expectation and/or career prep management activities



Takeaways from the “Super Four”

- ▶ Leveraging EL Programs can maximize practical and theoretical outcomes
 - ▶ Student Learning and Opportunities
 - ▶ Research Capabilities
 - ▶ Funding Sources
 - ▶ Inter-department collaboration
 - ▶ Program Design and Delivery
 - ▶ Practitioner efficiency of resources; training new workers
- ▶ Use large sporting events with multiple components for maximum effect
- ▶ Design enough time to allow and identify the peaks and valleys, then infuse resources



Recommendations

1. Create Accessible “Best Practices” for EL in Sport Mgt.
2. Develop Sport Mgt. Community Group on EL
3. Identify and establish more specific EL design criteria
4. Continue to disseminate information on research and practical findings
5. Share resources, program tools, and seek collaboration on programming offering (intra or inter-university; practitioners; students)

Thank You and Enjoy the Ride!!



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