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Sport Management Accreditation:
Trends and Challenges

Overview of Research

- ❖ Collaboration with Heather Alderman, COSMA, Executive Director
- ❖ Institutional Review Board: Endicott College
- ❖ Emails sent to member programs
- ❖ Multi-layered research design:

First stage - phone interviews with each program director (core questions and prepared prompts).

Second stage - evaluation of site visit reports to understand what areas of non-compliance reviewers cite most commonly (and least commonly).

Third stage - cross-tabulation of themes to determine core areas to be used for further COSMA training and initiatives.

Research Scope

To determine:

- ❖ Improvements within the program, department, and/or institution as a result of completing the accreditation process.
- ❖ Impact of accreditation on internal operations within the program, department, and/or institution.
- ❖ Perceived benefits COSMA accreditation provides for dual accredited programs (AACSB/IACBE/ACBSP).
- ❖ Comparison of non-compliance areas cited by reviewers.

Participants

- ❖ 13 COSMA Member Programs
 - ❖ 6 Accredited Programs
 - ❖ 3 Candidates for Accreditation
 - ❖ 4 Planning to apply for Candidacy Status
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- ✧ Email contact to secure participation
 - ✧ Interviews lasted 30 to 60 minutes
 - ✧ Employment at institution ranged from 2-23 years

Emergent Themes

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Group Discussion

1. How can we use COSMA to recruit students from high school into sport management? What do other specialized accreditors do?
2. What end result(s) do you expect your program(s) to gain from COSMA accreditation? Are the perceived benefits realized?
3. Identify the resources used by those managing the accreditation process. What else can COSMA do to assist?
4. What has changed within Sport Management since the establishment of COSMA?

Emergent Themes

1. Challenges
2. Opportunities & Benefits
3. Outcomes Assessment & Strategic Planning
4. Faculty Involvement
5. The COSMA Effect
6. Enrollment

Challenges

✧ **Role**

- Not all respondents hold formal administrative positions.

✧ **Time**

- “Too hectic to write report during academic year”
- “... balancing teaching, grading, and serving on committees”
- “difficult to set aside enough time to finish the report”
- “... find time in the school semester to have in-depth conversations”

Challenges

❖ Details of Report

- “ambiguity of the process is both positive and negative”
- “nice to have some leeway”
- “... right on track and the site visitors may say something different and then you get the report and you need to send something else back”

COSMA is a leader in outcomes-based assessment and accreditation, in which excellence in sport management education is evaluated based on the assessment of educational outcomes, rather than on prescriptive input standards.

(COSMA, Accreditation Process Manual, December 2015, p. 5)

Opportunities & Benefits

Accreditation “implies that the professional membership of a field, such as sport management, is willing to accept the responsibility for ensuring educational quality and is willing to be held accountable for the quality of their collective graduates.”

(Fielding, Pitts, Miller, 1991, p. 3-4)

✧ **Programmatic Changes**

- “assessment plan would have happened, but not at the same level of detail or as in depth without COSMA”
- “due to COSMA, the curriculum is better aligned with CPC (Common Professional Component) requirements”
- “helps us know what the industry standards are”
- “understand expectations of COSMA requirements ... maintain quality”
- “process provides a self-evaluation (of the curriculum) based on the COSMA standards”

Opportunities & Benefits

Growth of sport management programs equates to concerns about the quantity and quality of faculty. (Mahony, Hums, & Judd, 2006)

✧ Staffing

- “they feel stretched”
- “if you want to keep your quality ... you cannot rely on adjuncts to teach these core classes”

AACSB accreditation was a strong lever for change, both internal to the business school and externally with university administration.

(Elliott, 2013)

✧ Leveraging Accreditation

- “an additional selling point internally and that gives us credibility and this helps when we argue for positions”
- “stamp of approval”
- “clear up misconceptions about ... sport management”
- “tell our story to academic administrators”

Outcomes Assessment & Strategic Planning

✧ **COSMA Home Office**

- “when you are going through ... the application of candidacy status it doesn’t need to be perfect and that is part of the time where you are trying to flesh out issues and make them better”

✧ **Curriculum/CPCs/SLOs**

- “COSMA is helping to move conversation forward”
- “going through the candidacy process has caused us to realize what we are teaching students, what we say we are teaching students, and made us make changes”
- “insight into strengths and weaknesses”

Outcomes Assessment & Strategic Planning

✧ **Enhanced deliverables and measures**

- “fortunate the university was moving toward assessment at the same time, we were being consistent with what the college wanted, COSMA wanted and used process to build our program”
- “mapping of courses”
- “address the key areas within COSMA assessment much more clearly and more directly”
- “made us take a step back ... and make adjustments to the curriculum”

Faculty Involvement

Faculty collaboration creates “an authenticity to the process that is lacking when only administrators are the primary authors.” (Bucalos, 2013, p. 6)

✧ Buy-In

- “being up front to explain what COSMA is and what the goals are and why we want to make our program so much better”
- “the buy-in was good from the start ... there was a reason for doing this and the justifications for doing it far outweighed the challenges”
- “resistance to the process”

✧ Participation

- “COSMA has helped to shape that dialogue ... we talk about strategic planning but never have officially done it”
- “COSMA was top of the agenda, each meeting we covered topics and issues followed by changes, we did not do anything special we just folded COSMA into the (departmental) meetings”
- “taking a closer look at your program”

Faculty Involvement

“Sport management faculty need to act as the critical conduit between students and the industry, providing preparatory opportunities both within and outside of the classroom with the goal of adding value to the student degrees as well as increasing their employability.”

(Braunstein-Minkove & DeLuca, 2015, p. 123)

✧COSMA Involvement

- “colleagues in the sport management program are going to the COSMA conference which is now on their radar due to their involvement”
- “they feel more comfortable with accreditation”
- “networking”

The COSMA Effect

“Accreditation provides external accountability as a form of self-regulation for colleges, universities, and programs.” (Yiamouyiannis et al., 2013, p. 52)

✧ **Changes due to the direct influence of COSMA**

- **“Validated” – “Recognized” – “Credible”**
- “recognition that you are an accredited program”
- “recognized by an outside agency that we are doing the right thing for our program and our students”

Accountability due to COSMA review and reporting

- “holds you to a continuous process of improvement”
- “COSMA motivates programs to make changes”

Enrollment

✧ Indirect relationship

- Not enough data collected to determine effect on families and high school students.
- “not sure how much the searching high school student is affected by any accreditation”
- “high school students are pleased and more interested once they learn about COSMA”

✧ COSMA as branding opportunity (website, admissions related events)

- “reputation in the geographic area”
- “extra value”
- “the consumer is slowly becoming aware of what this means related to excellence in Sport Management education”

COSMA Principles

- ✧ Principle 1: Outcomes Assessment
- ✧ Principle 2: Strategic Planning
- ✧ Principle 4: Faculty

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Findings

Improvements within the program, department, and/or institution as a result of completing the accreditation process.

- ✓ **COSMA has influenced positive change**
- ✓ **Designated program director**
- ✓ **Time to complete report**

Impact of accreditation on internal operations within the program, department, and/or institution.

- ✓ **Outcomes assessment and strategic planning are the core areas of concern.**

Perceived benefits COSMA accreditation provides for dual accredited programs (AACSB/IACBE/ACBSP).

- ✓ **Within the scope of this research no correlation can be established.**

Better understanding of the needs of program directors throughout the accreditation process.



Thank you!!!

References

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