

ENGAGING SPORT MANAGEMENT MILLENNIALS: ADAPTING CURRICULA FOR A NEW GENERATION OF STUDENTS

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PRESENTATION OVERVIEW



This presentation is based upon conclusions drawn from extensive research investigating Sport Management students' perceptions of their major, curriculum, internships, and general preparation for their future career within the sport industry.

Session Objectives:

- (a) Discuss research findings related to the sport management millennial mindset;
- (b) Articulate necessary areas of change and improvement within typical sport management curricula to better engage millennial students;
- (c) Describe instances within the processes of teaching and learning where it is important to resist and challenge millennial students.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MILLENNIALS



- Millennials ("Millennials," 2015):
 - Birth cohort from 1981-2000
 - Approximately 75 million in U.S.
- 7 Traits (Williams, Beard, & Tanner, 2011):
 - Special
 - Sheltered
 - Confident
 - Team-oriented
 - Achieving
 - Pressured
 - Conventional

CHARACTERISTICS OF MILLENNIALS



Positive Labels	Negative Labels	Miscellaneous
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tech savvy • Wired • Earnest • Optimistic • Informed • Orientation towards public service & helping others • Entrepreneurial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fame obsessed • Entitled • Inactive • Falling behind global peers • Coddled, lazy, & delusional • Over-confident • Maintain a disconnect between expectations and reality • Narcissistic • Cannot respond to criticism & blames others • Expects others to solve problems & rule bending • Parental involvement • Lack ability to communicate face to face 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value leisure • In no hurry • Free thinkers • Want more than money • High need for praise

RESEARCH PURPOSE



- The purpose of this work is to develop a greater understanding of the current sport management student so as to structure programs in an engaging manner while still adhering to the important benchmarks of teaching and the goals of higher education.
 - Support and direct:
 - Curriculum development and redesign
 - Engagement with internal and external constituents
 - Relations with program alumni

METHODS, DATA COLLECTION & RESULTS



Mixed method data collection:

- Sport Management Interns over one year/four semesters:
 - Focus groups with student (n = 59)
 - Web-based survey (qualitative & quantitative data) (n = 100)
 - 75% male; 25% female; all upper-classmen
- Industry Professionals/Site Supervisors:
 - Phone calls/e-mails & survey during time period of student internship(s) (n = 82)

Results: Three major themes identified relating to student preparedness:

- **Academic Development:** How and why curriculum change should occur in this program.
- **Experiential Development:** The importance of experiential learning as it relates to future career choice and knowledge of the industry.
- **Professional Development:** Presenting students with various opportunities to improve their professional development skills and competencies.

CURRICULUM & PEDAGOGY: RESIST & CHALLENGE MILLENNIALS



Example #1: Data suggests the millennial student is unprepared for the industry in various ways and they are seeking greater professional development assistance.

- "I think there should be kind of like a sophomore/junior year internship where you maybe only have to do like 80 hours, and you're just getting your feet wet, and you're actually learning Publisher and Excel and that type of stuff, in your um, first internship. And then in your senior year you take your internship where you're taking the 120, whatever the hours are gonna be now, the 150, where it's more serious and it's starting to be more of a job than an internship." – Student Participant, Focus Group
- "More on-site work, like actually going somewhere and doing stuff. Like some of the classroom stuff we do doesn't actually prepare you like actually being somewhere and doing it would. ... I just think hands on experience and actually doing it is better than reading it in a text book or something like that." – Student Participant, Focus Group

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WHAT WE DID – CHALLENGE MILLENNIAL STUDENTS TO BE EXCELLENT CANDIDATES FOR INDUSTRY POSITIONS BY BETTER PREPARING THEM:

- KNES 345: Field Experience in Sport Management - more focus on working in sport (the reality, rigors, challenges, etc.) & the mandate of pre-internship contact hours.
 - More classroom career-based preparation (resumes, interviewing, etc.)
- Raised number of credits for required internship from 3 to 6, with option for 12.
- Create and offer new, innovative, APPLIED electives that push boundaries, necessitate new connections and relationships, better prepare students for industry.
 - Applied Sport Marketing, Event Management, Sports Communication

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WHAT WE DID – CHALLENGE MILLENNIAL STUDENTS TO BE EXCELLENT CANDIDATES FOR INDUSTRY POSITIONS BY BETTER PREPARING THEM:

- Stronger collaborations across campus are necessary in order to facilitate and improve experiential & professional development-related competencies.
 - Students already pay for many campus services that can help them augment their experiential and professional development skills:
 - Academic Advising
 - Office of Student Activities
 - Campus Recreation & University Athletics
 - Study Abroad
 - Career Center
- More networking opportunities:
 - Working to develop strong, connected, alumni network
 - Engage with industry practitioners in the classroom (adjuncts & guest speakers) and within extra-curricular opportunities (speed networking, panels)

CURRICULUM & PEDAGOGY: RESIST & CHALLENGE MILLENNIALS



Example #2: Data suggests the millennial student does not understand the point of major coursework that is not geared towards their professional preparation for industry.

- "I mean some classes aren't like that useful -- Sport and Cross cultural perspectives ... Its really not going to help me in my career because its not really telling me anything that is going to happen in the industry." – Student Participant, Focus Group
- "one of my projects was to basically invest in an activity like yoga or like join a league, something like that, outside of class. And it was just like... 'so now I'm supposed to spend money, and do some activity I've never done before, for however many weeks, just to complete a project?' That I just thought was a waste of time." – Student Participant, Focus Group

CURRICULUM & PEDAGOGY: RESIST & CHALLENGE MILLENNIALS



Example #2: Data suggests the millennial student does not understand the point of major coursework that is not geared towards their professional preparation for industry.

WHAT WE DID – CHALLENGE MILLENNIAL STUDENTS TO THINK CRITICALLY, OFFER THEM A FRAMEWORK TO MAKE CONNECTIONS AND RESIST ELIMINATING IMPORTANT COURSES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO PRODUCING WELL-ROUNDED STUDENTS:

- Core/existing course offerings need to be modified to include more focus on tangible, practical skills & competencies for professional development.
 - Formal, practical document(s) useful in hiring process such as portfolios and business plans.
- Modify course offerings/curriculum:
 - Applicable to a sport-specific career (consider "tracks" or "cognate areas")
 - Develop more management-oriented course offerings over socio-cultural courses.

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- Updated Sport & Cross-Cultural Perspectives to Sport & Globalization
 - Greater emphasis on articulating connections and critical thinking related to how content can be applied and considered outside the classroom.
 - *Critical Sport Management* viewpoint offered through *Socio-Cultural* issues:
 - Sport & labor migration/talent pipelines
 - International expansion of professional leagues
 - Sport mega-events & cultural consequences
 - Sport-related examples involving: Production versus consumption, Exploitation versus opportunity, Dependency versus development

CURRICULUM & PEDAGOGY: RESIST & CHALLENGE MILLENNIALS



Example #3: Data suggests the millennial student needs more hand-holding and a customized academic program geared towards their professional career.

- "I think a lot of our classes don't necessarily apply to the professional world. There are just certain things that -- we're reading articles that are like, research studies and things like that, which are all well and good, but I'm not sure that they specifically fit the whole process that we're talking about. The common-sense skills. Once you're out there, how does writing these long papers and reading these research articles pertain to the operations for a professional team or doing tickets for the Redskins? So, that's just something that I think about. While I think it is very valuable, I'm just not sure how it fits into what we're all going to do post-graduation." - Student Participant, Focus Group
- "a football class. I went in there and I had no idea what was going on, its like they talked in a different language." - Student Participant, Focus Group
- "a class on specific terminology for different sports." - Student Participant, Focus Group
- "a Common Sense 101 class. All the [things] that your site supervisor expects you to have as common sense, but unless you've had a job before you wouldn't really know exactly how to do." - Student Participant, Focus Group

CURRICULUM & PEDAGOGY: RESIST & CHALLENGE MILLENNIALS



Example #3: Data suggests the millennial student needs more hand-holding and a customized academic program geared towards their professional career.

WHAT WE DID – CHALLENGE MILLENNIAL STUDENTS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED, WORK TO DEMONSTRATE THE VALUE OF THEIR COURSEWORK AND RESIST HAND-HOLDING:

- Greater emphasis on articulating connections and offering practical links for *HOW* content can be applied and considered outside the classroom.
- Flipped classrooms with review of materials on own and classroom time contains applied activities, simulations, debates, discussions, case studies, etc.
- Promote critical thinking, analysis, through discussion and assignments.
 - Utilizing industry/trade publications and non-textbook readings in the classroom.
 - Applied, simulation activities, case studies, debates, presentations
- Work to funnel the "right" students through the major and help place students in other majors who may not really want a career in sport.

RECOMMENDATIONS



To facilitate a prepared millennial graduate:

- Always allow for program evolution (conduct programmatic and curricular research).
- Strive to incorporate and focus on the millennial student's needs in the areas of academic, experiential, and professional development.
 - Work to collaborate with campus resources in meaningful ways.
 - Push for experiential, applied learning to occur within upper-level course offerings in many majors.
- Expect adherence to standards; set clear, concise rules (Much et al., 2014).
- Multi-media classrooms to maintain student engagement (Novotony, 2010; Revell & McCurry, 2010; Werth & Werth, 2011).
 - Flipped classrooms, clickers, iPads, online exams, etc.
 - Social media engagement
- Stimulate critical thinking skills (Wilson, 2004).
- Facilitate discussions and others exercises which help students articulate the relationship between the theoretical and practical.

THANK YOU!



Questions & Discussion?



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