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## Think globally, engage pedagogically: Procuring and supervising international field experiences



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### ABSTRACT

Similar to society in general, globalization of the world economy has changed the landscape of the sport industry (Dicken, 2007; Neirotti, 2015; Thibault, 2009). As competition for the sport fan's discretionary dollar becomes more intense in America, the international market and associated financial opportunities will undoubtedly increase. As a result, it is important that sport management students gain experience both at home and abroad to be highly competitive for employment opportunities in the sport industry (Lee & Lupi, 2010). In order to prepare sport management students for the global marketplace, sport management educators to foster opportunities for students to complete international practicums, internships, and other forms of authentic experiential learning. Educators need to be aware of a variety of resources that can be used to supervise field experiences-particularly "distance" based international field experiences. The purpose of this presentation is to outline best practices associated with online supervision of international experiential learning experiences. Recommendations on creating and maintaining relationships with international partners, strategies for supervision, and methods of evaluation will be included. A step-by-step process model will be presented aimed at providing meaningful learning experiences for students and building enduring partnerships for the institution.

### 1. Introduction

The prominence of the global economy its impact on the educational process and curriculum is significant in a variety of fields. Sport management is one discipline in which adjusting curricular practices and creating international programs that are designed to prepare students for the global workforce is necessary (Jones, Brooks, & Mak, 2008). Similar to society in general, globalization of the world economy has changed the landscape of the sport industry (Dicken, 2007; Neirotti, 2015; Peretto Stratta, 2004; Thibault, 2009). Eitzen (2012) identifies globalization as being a process in which information, people, money, cultural trends, and sport practices move across national borders. The global popularity of sport, coupled with the potential revenue streams that international markets present to sport organizations has encouraged rapid growth in professional and educational opportunities within the industry. Many major professional sport organizations now see the financial benefits of operating internationally, as there are plentiful opportunities to work with international sporting events, international sport leagues and teams, and other sport properties abroad. For example, the National Basketball Association (NBA) has grown its brand by expanding internationally since 1990. They currently have approximately 14 international offices across the globe, whose mission is to focus on developing the sport of basketball and the National Football League (NFL) holds multiple American football games in London annually (Neirotti, 2015).

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As competition for the sport fan's discretionary dollar becomes more intense in America, the international market and associated financial opportunities will undoubtedly increase. As a result, it is important that sport management students gain experience both at home and abroad to be highly competitive for employment opportunities in the sport industry (Lee & Lupi, 2010). In order to prepare sport management students to be competitive in the global marketplace, it is important for educators to foster opportunities for students to complete international practicums, internships, and other forms of experiential learning. Educators need to be aware of a variety of resources that can be used to supervise field experiences—particularly “distance” based international field experiences. The “distance” reference here is analogous to that of “distance learning” where the student and instructor are separated by either distance or time, in this case, distances that may be international. The purpose of this manuscript is to outline effective practices associated with online supervision of international experiential learning experiences. Recommendations for creating and maintaining relationships with international partners, strategies for supervision, and methods of evaluation will be included.

## 2. Experiential learning

Experiential learning practices such as field experiences (i.e., internships and practicals) have long functioned as a principal constituent of sport management education (Bennett, Henson, & Drane, 2003). Such authentic experiences bridge theory with practice while affording students the opportunity to engage in educational experiences that provide “real-world” applications. Further, the Commission on Sport Management Accreditation (COSMA) considers experiential learning to be vital to professional development (COSMA, 2012; Pierce & Petersen, 2015). Strategic implementation of sport management field experiences involves the application of scholarship and curricular competences, which is reinforced while preparing students for entry and advancement in the field of sport management (Lee & Lupi, 2010). Scholars from the field of sport management, as well as from other disciplines, have assessed methods for enhancing learning, maximizing student experiences, and introducing students to information and experiences that develop professional competencies and characteristics that are expected from employers (Ash & Clayton, 2009; Hagenbuch, 2006; Madsen & Turnbull, 2006; Miller, Meaney, & Podlog, 2012; Scovill & Waite, 2012).

In 2008, George Kuh presented his research on high impact educational practices, indicating first-year students and seniors, in particular, that participate in study abroad, service learning, learning communities, student-faculty research, and senior culminating experiences described enhanced learning and personal development. Kuh (2008) describes service learning as experiential learning with community partners that include the key elements of applying what they are learning in a real world setting followed by a reflection of that experience in a classroom setting. Many are calling for the academy to extend their reach outside the walls of the campus and into the community to help address the ongoing needs of our society. There is also support for those walls to extend beyond the borders of our country. Well-constructed experiential learning can be one of the mechanisms for that to take place.

Experiential learning experiences exist in many forms and can be conducted in an international setting. Study abroad, also referred to in this article as international experiences, allow students the opportunity to gain a multicultural perspective, which may not be possible inside the walls of the classroom in one's native community. The benefits of international field experiences have been touted by various academicians (i.e., Batey, 2014, Batey & Lupi, 2012; Gates, 2014; Hulstrand, 2013). Increasing our student's global perspectives increases the likelihood that they will be better able to understand how to work in an industry that is increasingly moving to a global presence (Kane & Janson, 2011). International learning opportunities have the potential to broaden individual horizons and increase ones appreciation for diverse populations. Students can benefit from not only gaining a deeper understanding of diverse groups, but also taking part in different societal practices, experiencing cultural exchanges, and observing the role sport plays in the social fabric of various countries. International experiential learning allows students to gain valuable knowledge, professional, and marketable skills (Lee & Lupi, 2010; Montrose, 2002).

While much of the literature on experiential learning focuses on the advantages of the pedagogical practice, these endeavors are not without challenges. Such challenges are typically related to the legal liabilities an institution may face by requiring a student to participate in a field based learning experience. The legal issues most often encountered are tort liability (civil laws involving issues of legal liability), workplace harassment and discrimination, and labor laws (Schoeperfer & Dodds, 2010). The management of these responsibilities can pose challenges for educators. This can be further complicated when additional factors such as online supervision (i.e., distance, international) field experiences are undertaken.

## 3. Global sport management field experiences at a distance

The recognition of the need to implement learning opportunities abroad necessitates the ability to engage in effective supervision and assessment via distance education methods. The development of technological implications has encouraged a reconceptualization and implementation of innovative teaching delivery formats. Web-based technological advances have unlocked avenues for distance learning pedagogies (Anderson & Dron, 2011; Harper, Chen, & Yen, 2004). Accordingly, contemporary institutions of higher education have increasingly engaged in distance learning offerings over the past couple of decades (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009; US Department of Education, NCES, 2015). Online learning has become a common educational delivery medium in higher education that continues to expand (Lee, Kane, & Cavanaugh, 2015). Predominantly, today's students are products of the “net generation,” represented by “digital natives” who readily accept and implement technological advancements (Jones, Ramanau, Cross, & Healing, 2010; Prensky, 2001; Thibault, 2009).

Another characteristic of digital natives is the inclination to participate in online courses. For example, during the 2007-08 academic year over 4.5 million undergraduate students were enrolled in a minimum of at least one distance education course (US Department of Education NCES, 2011). This figure accounts for about 20% of all undergraduate students in the country. The rate of

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