

Running a Successful Major's Club: Real-World Experience Outside the Classroom

Jennifer Parsons, Ed.D., Wittenberg University
and Lance P. Kaltenbaugh, Ed.D., Ashland University

Student organizations are integral to the overall college experience. Sport management major's clubs can provide meaningful out-of-classroom opportunities where members can demonstrate their interests, experience, and appreciation for sport while learning what it takes to be successful in this ultra-competitive field. Networking, social engagement, personal and professional development as well as fostering leadership and communication skills are benefits commonly associated with being a member. Munoz, et al., (2016) found professional development activities and networking with professionals positively influenced student participation. Running a successful majors' club strengthens your program as well as provides leadership opportunities for your students (Ewing, et al., 2009).

The primary role of a major's club is to provide a clear vision and foster growth and development of the student members and the respective educational programs of a school. Sport management major's clubs promote and encourage a positive image of the school. Major clubs consist of students, faculty advisor, and alumni of the school that help foster an ongoing relationship between graduates, the school and current students. Through club events, projects, field trips, and guest speakers, members will have multiple opportunities to gain valuable experience and networking opportunities that can provide a competitive advantage when starting a career.

Define Your Major's Club

A student organizations primary purpose must support the goals and mission of the University. Student Organizations are asking the strategic questions – Where is our greatest value? What should be our priorities? How do we increase our relevance to our students, to the university, and the profession?

Create a Vision

Universities typically require sponsored clubs to have a clear vision that outlines goals, expectations, and requirements. Classification is determined by assessing the student organization's relationship to their university; the purpose, scope and complexity of its activities; and the perceived potential risk to participants and the university. Clubs also must reconsider their roles, membership, and structure to be more aligned with the major's strategic goals and objectives.

University Sponsored

The purpose of a sponsored student organization is to provide a structure through which students may exercise their right to freely associate in pursuit of a common purpose or goal that enhances community at their university and within their major. University sponsored student organizations create opportunities for leadership development, learning, student engagement, and fostering of shared interests.

Establish Identifiable Leaders

Successful student organizations have individuals that possess strong organization and leadership traits. The leader of the organization should be willing to work with the university, to contribute time, to express and encourage enthusiasm, and to motivate and engage students to fully participate in the clubs' activities. This said, a club requires formal organization with a leader and a set of officers.

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Long-Term Engagement

Focus on a continuum of involvement, beginning as soon as a student enrolls (if not before) and extending through graduation and life. Provide programs that target all types of students (i.e. freshman to alumni). Studies show that nurturing this bond, starting with young students to alumni, leads to consistent and increased philanthropic support over time (Bosshart, Wentz, & Heller, 2009; Ducharme & Stratton, 2001).

Foster Meaningful Relationships

A benefit of student organizations is that members get the opportunity to build their professional network. Meeting new students, making connections, and fostering relationships will all help down the line when students are looking for a job within their career path. Because major club members are from the same university, the people students meet share many of the same interests, so their connections will be valuable.

Establish Networks

Numerous studies and institutional experiences have demonstrated the promise of student organizations as growth engines for overall institutional support within and outside the university. Some institutions have coordinated major clubs with professionals in the field. Creating these mutual synergies through coordinated messaging and other structural approaches strengthens on and off campus relationships with industry representatives who willingly have knowledge to share. An extensive contact list (professional network) is also highly valuable when starting your internship and career search.

Information Technology – Social Media

Student organizations must take advantage of the technology that is at their disposal. A major club should establish a structure to use social media as part of their membership, diverse programming, social events, etc. Social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook can be used to help past, current, and future students learn about student's experiences and create positive visibility for the major club and university.

Engagement Opportunities

Professional student organizations give students the opportunity to learn more about particular fields, such as sport management, and to take part in events, programs, and activities that put sport concepts into practice. Additional opportunities can be diverse programming for student, alumni, families and friends such as career networking, life-long learning, community service, membership services, legislative advocacy, social events, student services and young alumni programs.

Allow Members to Have Fun

Student organizations are a great outlet to provide multiple opportunities for members to gain valuable real-world skills and experiences. It is essential to organize and plan programs and events that rely on the whole learning experience. Sometimes that means major clubs should not only provide career development opportunities, but give members a catalyst to have fun! Having fun is another powerful tool to increase group communication and promote group cohesion.