EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATION AND INSTRUCTION IN AN ONLINE GRADUATE PROGRAM

Author:
Paula Upright

email:
paula.upright@wku.edu

Co-authors:
Gibson, Fred, Graduate Coordinator; Recreation and Sport Administration; Western Kentucky University Larson, Bruce, Curriculum Coordinator; Sport Management; Kinesiology, Recreation & Sport; Western Kentucky University Smith, Darren, Assistant Professor; Sport Management; Kinesiology, Recreation & Sport; Western Kentucky University Teague, Travis, Interim Department Chair; Human Performances and Sport Sciences Department; Winston-Salem State University

University:
Western Kentucky University

Faculty:
Paula Upright, Assistant Professor Sport Management/Kinesiology, Recreation and Sport

Abstract

Online education is increasingly popular in higher education with universities investing heavily to keep up with student demands (Appana, 2008). The aim of this paper is to explore the administration and pedagogical considerations of a successful online graduate program at Western Kentucky University. WKU's vision is to be a leading American university with international reach and is the home to many highly ranked and nationally recognized academic programs. The fastest growing university in Kentucky for 13 years straight, nearly 21,000 students grace our campuses.This paper specifically examines the administrative and instructional considerations of a 100% on-line Master of Science in Recreation and Sports Administration with a concentration in Athletic Administration and Coaching. The cohort-based concentration goes beyond theoretical instruction and provides knowledge, skills and professional expertise in the fields of athletic administration and coaching. This program is designed to prepare interscholastic athletic professionals for the leadership skills required as both disciplines in coaching and athletic administration grow. The program design also meets the demands of working physical education professionals and targets highly motivated individuals. The web-based approach allows students the ability to increase their understanding of the field of Athletic Administration without altering their personal and professional schedules.

According to Combe (2005), successful online graduate programs require an integration of administration, teaching and technical support. WKU's online program has administrative and technical support from the Division of Extended Learning Office (DELO). DELO provides a cohort program director, cohort program specialist, instructional designer and an instructional technology specialist. Marketing efforts are also coordinated through this distance learning office. The graduate faculty have diverse backgrounds and experience in all areas of athletic administration. The faculty use various instructional tools and delivery systems including, Blackboard, Skype, Tegrity, Twitter, Facebook and other social media and instructional tools. Online instruction requires a different form of communication and relationship between faculty and students (Dykman & Davis, 2008). Gallien & Oomen-Early (2008) state effective online course delivery involves much more than repackaging of traditional course content.

Classroom methods focus on preparing individuals for the ever-changing economic, political, legal and marketing concerns that are a part of the sports industry. The program is designed for a specific number of students (cohort) to move through the coursework together, taking the same classes while building peer relationships. This sequencing outlines a sure path to degree attainment, guaranteed placement in classes and additional admissions and registration services. The instructional goals of the faculty are to further knowledge through an application based course structure. This structure is designed to enhance skills and competencies in athletic administration and coaching, utilize current working problems within the profession in order to assess solutions to established needs and build a professional networking base for the sharing of issues and problems in order to integrate a logical problem-solving paradigm. Additionally, upon completion of the program, participants will be able to apply for certification through the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA) to be a Certified Athletic Administrator or Certified Master Athletic Administrator.

This paper focuses on the administration and effective instructional techniques for an online sport management program. Methods for success, budgeting, innovative techniques, class scheduling, curriculum development, selection of faculty and recruitment and retention of quality students will be discussed. Best practices for teaching in sport management may be different in the online classroom. These differences will be explored and compared with traditional face-to-face techniques used by sport faculty. The WKU program currently admits approximately 100 students each year. With increasing interest in online delivery and sport management programs, this is a timely and appropriate topic for discussion among sport educators and management professionals.

References:

Appana, S. (2008). A review of benefits and limitations of online learning in the context of the student, the instructor, and the tenured faculty. International Journal on ELearning, 7(1), 5-22.

Combe, C. (2005). Developing and implementing an online doctoral programme. International Journal of Educational Management, 1, 118-128.

Dykman, C. A. & Davis, C. K. (2008). Online education forum: Part two—teaching online versus teaching conventionally. Journal of Information Systems Education, 19, 157-164.

Gallien, T. & Oomen-Early, J. (2008). Personalized versus collective instructor feedback in the online classroom: Does type of feedback affect student satisfaction, academic performance and perceived connectedness with the instructor? International Journal on ELearning, 7, 463-476.