I'll be proud to know I've had to force down a few sows on the fundraising trail, but I still will not touch unsweetened. And thank you so much for being here. It means a lot. Dan says, Illinois, in the last week or so of the legislative session, it's a very busy time for a university president. And so it means a lot for me to have you here.

So I'm going to talk this morning a little bit about reputation and legitimacy of sport management and academic discipline from a higher education administrator's perspective. As Dan mentioned, I'm 21 years removed from getting a Ph.D., but for the last 17 years in my dean role, sport management has just been another academic program for me. I have to be objective and unbiased in how I view the field. So I'm going to talk a lot today about sport management from a higher education administrator's perspective and how we might be able to do things differently as an academic discipline to position us for more resources compared to other academic programs in the academy.

First, certainly we're here today to honor the great legacy of Dr. Earl Ziegler. Earle said the following, if you know where you've been and you know where you are, you'll be in a much better position to know where you should go. There is much brilliance in that simple quote, and I hope to honor Earle's legacy today by using that quote to guide this presentation.

Before I begin, I'd like to offer my sincere gratitude to the many students, faculty, and staff, and colleagues who have impacted me at the institutions where I have learned and also worked. Several of these individuals are in the room today. The great W.B. Yates once said, Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire. And I truly appreciate those who have lit that fire in me and stoked it along the way.

I also want to offer special tribute to two individuals who play a very significant role in my development, but who are not here in the room with us today. Dr. John Kovaleski was Professor of Exercise Science at the Department of Health, Kinesiology, and Sport at the University of South Alabama. And after changing my major many times as an undergraduate student, I took an undergraduate course in Kinesiology from Dr. K, and soon I changed my major and was spending any spare time that I had volunteering in his lab and working on research. He was my faculty advisor, and I remember going into an advising meeting one day, and he said, is, Damon, have you ever thought about becoming a faculty member? You know, and to be honest, I'd never even thought about it. I had no idea that you had to go and continue on and what degrees you needed to get. You know, he walked me through the entire process and invited me to get involved in a number of different research projects, even as an undergraduate. And that was a life-changing moment for me.

Inside the front cover of all those Research Methodist book editions that Dan talked about, you'll note that I dedicate those books to John Kovaleski, who first encouraged me to pursue an academic career. But that wasn't enough. In 2021, I returned to my undergraduate alma mater to make a gift to establish the endowed Dr. Johnny E. Cobalesti Future Faculty Scholarship at the University of South Alabama. And that's a picture from that day there. I wanted to make sure that future students at the university learned about Dr. K and the great mentorship that he provided to me and thousands of other students during his career. Without his intervention and mentorship, I would have never pursued a career as an academic, and I'm eternally grateful.

And then there's Chella. I first met Chella as a doctoral student at the FSU Sport Management Conference a long time ago. And Chella is an absolute intellectual superhero in my book. I'm so grateful for every moment we've spent together. And I have so many great Chella stories that I can tell, as I'm sure many of you do as well. But I had to narrow it down for one. In this photo, you'll see Chella and I both delivered keynote lectures at the 11th Annual Asian Association for Sport Management Conference in Langkawi, Malaysia. And that was in 2015. And Chella wanted to take me to visit India's Golden Triangle either before or after the conference, but it didn't work up with our schedules given the time it was going to take. And so instead, he took me to Singapore for three days after the Asian conference. And this photo was taken shortly after our flight landed. We found a restaurant with outdoor seating. I'm cooling off with a panacella, and he has a signature Roman coat. And for three days, we toured Singapore, and we never stopped talking. You know, I picked his brain about all kinds of things, and we had such a great time. And I've come to appreciate this experience even more over time. In today's society, I think it would actually be quite rare for a distinguished school professor to not only take the time, but also cover the expense of a three-day trip to Singapore with a colleague. He was also among the first to reach out when it was announced that I was receiving the Ziegler Award. And though his health did not permit him to come to the conference this year, I know he is with us in spirit.

So when I was a doctoral student at FSU, a professor once told me, Damon, there is no such thing as a final draft. You just run out of time. That statement triggered perfectionist tendencies in need that would now likely require decades of therapy to overcome. I won't mention the professor by name, but he's a Ziegler Award recipient, a fellow of the National Academy of Kinesiology, and he serves as chair of a prominent department of sport management in Tallahassee, Florida. So without further delay, here is where I ran out of time.

I'm going to talk to you today a little bit about the reputation and legitimacy and sport management program stakeholders in terms of their expectations and key milestones, and the history of sport management, some signs of sport management, reputation growth from external stakeholders, and then conclude with threats to reputation and legitimacy of sport management programs.

So first, talk a little bit about reputation and legitimacy. Reputation is perceptual representation of past actions and future expectations of a company that describes the terms of overall appeal to all its key constituents when compared with other rivals. Reputation reduces stakeholder uncertainty and concerns and increases trust in product quality, value, and differentiation. And identified business school quality dimensions include things like performance, services, products, leadership, governance, workplace climate, citizenship, and innovation.

And organizational legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions. So legitimacy is the perceived appropriateness of an organization to a social system in terms of rules, norms, values, and definition. It's dependent on the degree of cultural support for the organization. And positive outcomes of legitimacy are often noted to include credibility, trust, support from stakeholders, and enhanced access to resources necessary to operate. So specialized accreditation, for example, is a tool that higher education institutions use to enhance legitimacy.

A little bit more about the relationship between reputation and legitimacy, they share a symbiotic relationship. So legitimacy positively impacts our reputation via social acceptance, and since positive perceptions promote easier access to resources, reputation influences legitimacy. However, legitimacy is dichotomous. You're either perceived to be legitimate or you're not, while reputation functions along a continuum of negative and positive perceptions.

So challenges to legitimacy in higher education include things like rising costs. So the increased cost of higher education raises questions about value and accessibility. Also, AI and automation. The rise of AI and the potential for automation in some fields can challenge the perceived need for traditional degrees. Demographic changes, the planning involvement and shifts in the student population can affect the sustainability and legitimacy of some institutions. Competition. Increasing competition from other institutions and online learning platforms can impact an institution's legitimacy. And shifting student expectations. So changing student expectations and demands for more personalized and relevant learning experiences can also challenge traditional models.

In 2007, Van Aver Cohen used a typical business school as a context and outlined the various stakeholders to typical business schools as well as their associated expectations. So here I adapt her work and apply it to a typical sport management program.

So students are, of course, an important stakeholder group. They're looking for career advancement, specialized business skills, professional contacts, procedural and financial support, high-quality, accessible faculty.

The alumni of our sport management programs, they're wanting networking opportunities, service to the business community, professional degree development opportunities, and preserving the value of the degree, which is an entity that rises or falls in the economy as well.

Employers are looking for competent, trustworthy graduates.

The faculty, they want their research, time, and resources. They want professional development support. They want achievement, recognitions, and rewards, and a stimulating intellectual climate.

In the business community, they want the service of the business community in terms of internships and so forth, but also networking opportunities and professional development opportunities.

The parent university, where the sport management program is located, they have expectations as well. They want prestigious and productive faculty. They want high-performing students. They want strong ties to business and academic communities. They want strong financial performance in the academic program. And they want a competent leadership in place.

And your external evaluators, whether that be your accreditation agencies or even your administrative peers, they want to see the presence of a strong curriculum, a prestigious productive faculty, effective governance procedures, and competent leadership.

And then finally, your scholarly peers, who are in the room with you right now, they have expectations of you as well as an academic program. They want to see procedures productive faculty, and they want to see faculty professional service. I know those that are serving on the governing board at NASM want to make sure that we have future individuals who are qualified and willing to serve in that capacity.

So for academic disciplines, a key influencer of reputation and legitimacy is the development of scholarly associations and journals. So here are some of the key milestones in the history of sport management as an academic discipline.

In 1911, the very first courses were offered at the University of Wisconsin-Madison on the administration of sport and sporting events. And then in 1915, courses were offered at Columbia University on the preparation of athletic tickets and events. Then in 1949, Florida Southern University offered a specialized degree program in the business of baseball administration. And then in 1966, Ohio University offers the first generalized graduate program in sport management. And that same year, St. Thomas University, which was known as Biscayne College at the time, and St. John's University offered the very first undergraduate degree programs in sport management.

Then in 1985, this society, NASM, was established. In 1986, the National Association for Sports and Physical Education established a sport management task force to develop guidelines for sport management programs. In 1987, the very next year, the Journal of Sport Management was founded.

In 1993, ESIM was established. In 1995, SMANS was established. In 1999, an institutional sport management alliance represented by members of NASM, ESIM, and SMANS was formally establishing and held joint conferences with these regional associations in even-numbered years, for those who remember that. In 2002, the Asian Association of Sport Management was founded. In 2009, a Latin American Association for Sport Management was founded. In 2010, the African Sport Management Association was founded. In 2012, a World Association of Sport Management was established by members of the various regional associations.

The signs of sport management reputational growth from external stakeholders. So for the next few slides, I want to focus on a few sport management program stakeholders that I highlighted earlier and provide examples of signs of reputation growth for sport management programs. So I'm going to talk mostly about students in the parent university and their shared demand for academic programming and then also the scholarly peers. And I'll talk about this growing external reputation in terms of our NAK fellows with sport management backgrounds and also the growth of sport management faculty dean appointments.

So some of our program growth milestones. So in 1978, the number of sport management programs grew to 20 graduate programs and three undergraduate programs across North America. In 1995, we jumped to 88 degree programs. It's kind of tricky to follow some of these because they'll go back and forth between the number of universities that are offering them versus the number of programs.

In 1993, the number of sport management degree programs grew to 193 across North America. In 2003, sport management programs are being offered in 166 institutions. In 2010, that number grows to approximately 300 worldwide. In 2018, the number of sport management programs in North America alone grows to 504.

And in 2020, sport management degree programs counts included Canada with 17, Europe with 34, with 18, Asia with 19, for undergraduate and graduate study, and nearly 80% of the 50 global doctoral programs are located in Canada and the United States at that time.

So one of the challenges with looking at that old data is a lot of that was pulled from likely the NASA website. For a while, NASA website was keeping track of those programs. You remember Orland, any time of an academic program realized they were not on that list, they would email Orland, Orland would add it to that list. When I was serving on the board for many of those years, we didn't have, we were busy with other things, we didn't have individual board members who were going out and constantly scouring the internet to see when the new programs were coming along.

One of the ways to get around whether or not a program is self-reporting their presence on the NASA website, in the U.S. at least alone, is to go look at the National Center for Education Statistics IPEDS data. And so in the U.S., the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, requires that institutions that participate in federal student aid programs report data on enrollments, program completions, graduation rates, faculty and staff finances, institutional prices, and student financial aid. And the National Center for Education Statistics publishes integrated post-secondary educational data system, or IPEDS, data annually that provides details on outcomes such as the number of degree programs and specific majors for business.

So what I'm reporting here is tentative 2023 data that will not be finalized until December of this year. So you'll see there, it says that we have 760 out of 5,679 post-secondary institutions in the U.S. reported having sport management programs, but only 655 of those sport management programs reported at least one degree awarded in 2023. Some of that is incomplete data. Among those that did not report any graduates were the University of Kentucky, for example, and the University of Alabama. I visited both of those institutions and seen their sport management programs. I know they have students who are graduating, so they just didn't get it in by that first deadline. That'll get put in by the end of December here.

But you can see there's many sectors of institutions. We have 244 that are public four-year or above institutions. Those will be institutions like the University of Florida, the University of South Carolina, Texas A&M University.

Then we have public two-year universities. There's 71 universities. The larger players in that space are Union College of Union County, New Jersey, Tulsa Community College, SUNY Green Community College, New York.

Private, not-for-profit, four-year above, 432 institutions are in that classification. That's going to include your bigger players are Liberty University in Virginia, Concordia University, Irvine in California, Southern New Hampshire University.

And then private, not-for-profit, two-year, we have one institution. Give yourself extra points if you knew that Harcum College in Pennsylvania was the one private, not-for-profit, two-year institution.

Then private four years above, we have 11 institutions that are larger for graduates. And those areas are from Grand Canyon University in Arizona, American Public University System in West Virginia, Monroe College in New York.

And then private for-profit two years, only one institution. If you guessed the Swedish Institute College of Health Sciences in New York, give yourself additional ones.

So this next slide here, I include that provisional release data for 2022 to 2023, knowing that that final data is not going to be available until this summer. But I've gone back and compared against other previous years. I'm a little concerned because it's showing about a 300 student drop in support manager programs here, which has obviously not been consistent over the previous years. But I think some of that is due to the fact that all that data has not been reported yet, so interpret that with caution.

You can see the total 2023 data shows that there were 17,279 degrees that were awarded in the U.S. And in 2022, 17,631. There's been a 50.8% increase in degrees awarded from 2013 to 2023.

And here you can see the breakdown of degrees by type. Of course, the predominant being the bachelor's degree with about 65% of those degrees. Master's degrees are about 29% of that total. Associates are 2.5%. The post-bacc certificates are 1.3%, and the certificates that are greater than one year but less than two year in duration are 0.7%. You don't get doctoral completion data from iPads, but this gives you a good idea.

Now total degrees awarded in the U.S. in 2022 to 2023 across all majors was 5.2 million, so quite a large number there. So sport management degrees constitute about 0.33% of all degrees and certificates that were awarded the U.S. in 2022 to 2023, and about 0.4 or 5 percent of all degrees at four-year institutions.

So this informational degrees can also be broken down by location, and this is a Power BI figure that illustrates the number of sport management degrees awarded in the U.S. by county with increasingly darker shades of blue representing higher numbers of degrees awarded. So in 2002, the year with the most recent finalized data, Richland County and the University of in South Carolina was reporting the most degrees followed by Alachua County in Florida and Orange County in California.

And I can even break that down into growth so this is annual growth by location gives the viewer information about which counties have the fastest growing number of sport management degrees awarded so again similar to the last Power BI the larger the darker shades are in the faster growing areas in 2022 the year with the most recent finalized data, Yuma County in Arizona is experiencing the most growth in sport management degrees awarded, followed by Lucas County in Ohio and Lafayette County in Mississippi. I have all this broken down by different years so if you want to go to 2016 for example you can go through and it will show you that growth as well.

So this particular Power BI breaks down the number of sport management degrees awarded by a type of institution and the individual institution. So in 2022, the year with the most recent finalized data, the five universities that awarded the most sport management degrees include the University of South Carolina, Concordia University, Irvine, the University of Florida, Pennsylvania Western University, which was created by the 2022 merger of California University of Pennsylvania, Clarion University of Pennsylvania, and Edinburgh University of Pennsylvania, and then Texas A&M College Station. It's probably not surprising to see large public flagships on this list as they often have the resources to hire large members as board management faculty members.

The presence of large flagship universities at the top of this list is only a recent phenomenon. Let me pull up 2014 and this will cooperate. So, for example, in 2014, there were no large public flagship universities in the top five. California University of Pennsylvania, which is one of those three universities that merged to form Pennsylvania Western University in 2022, they were leading the way, followed by Concordia University, Irvine, Texas State University, Liberty University, and American Public University System.

And then a similar pattern emerged in 2016. So at California University of Pennsylvania in 2016, Concordia University, Irvine, and Liberty University were producing the most sport management graduates in the U.S.

And in 2017, so in 2017, Texas A&M University cracked the top three largest producers of graduates, but over 9% of all sport management degrees in the U.S. were being awarded by California University of Pennsylvania and Concordia University, Irvine, with Liberty University and Southern New Hampshire University filling out the top five.

So, back to 2022 where we had the data. You can also break this data out by institutional type. So private, non-for-profit, I can click here and it will just show those there. So the top three degree producers in private, non-for-profit, four universities were Concordia University, Irvine, Southern New Hampshire University, and Liberty University. And among institutions of that type, those three universities alone were cornering 17% of the market.

So we'll talk a little bit about parent university stakeholders and the demand for academic programming. So one of the many challenges in higher education administration is fairly comparing different types of academic programs across universities in order to make strategic decisions about resource allocations. In 2016, some colleagues at Indiana University and Auburn University joined me on a manuscript that was published in Kinesiology Review that focused on understanding budget models and their applications to academic programs.

In 17 years as a dean, I've worked for seven different provosts from all different types of academic backgrounds, and I have found these metrics and ratios in particular to be persuasive in my request for new faculty lines. These outcomes are persuasive when advocating for new resources because each one of them is directly tied to a resource screen for your university. I actually never request lines from a provost. Instead, I present him or her with investment opportunities, many of which generate a higher return on investment than the initial cost. And if I present an opportunity that generates $5 for every dollar invested by the provost, the provost then can cover the cost of the initial investment and still have a 400% profit margin to invest in other opportunities.

So it's a good exercise as a sport management program to analyze how competitive your particular program is on these metrics right here, particularly in comparison to other programs on your campus. While the typical sport management program might be stronger on enrollment-related metrics than grant-related metrics, Grant acquisition of sport management programs is definitely improving over time.

And there are other metrics and ratios that can be used for program comparison, and data concerning program engagement are of increasing interest to higher education administrators as they show the value added from their academic programs on their surrounding communities. Reputable sport management programs often require internships, and some sport management organizations are now quite dependent on hosting interns in order to meet their organizational objectives.

My FSU colleagues didn't know they were going to be highlighted like this, but here's a recent graphic that they posted on their social media pages, and it details the very significant impact of our sport management program that it has on sport management organizations. So even by using the current minimum wage in Florida of $14 per hour, the financial value of the internship support in the 2025 spring semester can be calculated at a minimum of nearly $266,000.

Next, I would like to talk about the science of reputation growth from our scholarly peers. So, one way that we can gauge our reputation growth as sport management faculty among our scholarly peers is through the quantity of sport management faculty who have been appointed as dean of a college or school over time.

We actually have a number of sport management faculty serving as department chairs and associate deans, so you might ask why I only included dean appointments as a reputation growth metric. While some sport management programs are in departments with a large number of academic programs like Texas A&M University, it is slowly becoming more common to see stand-alone departments of sport management like we have at FSU. In fact, one of our biggest sport management faculty recruiting advantages that we have at FSU is that every one of our sport management faculty will only be reviewed by other faculty with sport management expertise at the department level for tenure and or promotion. And then when the application gets to the college level, the dean with a sport management background will review it there. So not surprisingly, in a standalone Department of Sport Management, the department chair by default will have a sport management background. So that's not a good indicator of reputational growth from non-sport management peers.

As for associate deans in higher education administration, titles that begin with assistant or associate in them are responsible for carrying out the vision of their supervisor, but they do not have responsibility of setting that vision. So the dean appointments of a college or a school are a good indicator of reputational worth among scholarly peers because they indicate that a university has enough faith in a sport management faculty member to delegate the vision and direction of an entire college or school to him or her.

We also have a number of sport management faculty who have served as interim deans, but I did not include interim dean appointments because they were not permanent appointees to the role.

This slide details the appointments of sport management faculty deans, the faculty serves as deans of colleges or schools in chronological order. I reached out to many of these deans in a snowball sampling technique to ensure that this list was correct and comprehensive. But if you know of others who should be added to this list, please let me know before I submit this product to JSM for publication.

So this slide depicts the number of currently serving sport management deans in U.S. and Canada since 1999. So in this slide, when a dean's term ends, he or she is dropped on the current toll, so this slide only includes sport management deans that served in a particular academic year. So for many years, Jim Weiss was the only actively serving dean with a sport management background, but the numbers have increased significantly over time, particularly post-COVID from 2021 to 2023, when we see a 128.5% increase in sport management deans in only two years. I'll also note that Ryan Zappalack has been appointed dean at San Buesen State University a few months ago, so we're set to add another sport management dean to this chart for the 2025-2026 academic year.

Now on a side note, I've often described my sport management background as my secret weapon in higher education administration. Sport management has often claimed it is a unique industry for a number of reasons, But many of those reasons also translate into the higher education industry because both are really experience management industries.

For example, the sport industry is described as being unique because it sells an intangible product. Sport fans are buying a ticket, but they want the intangible experience. Likewise, the experience behind the diploma in higher education is more important than the diploma itself.

Sport claims to be a perishable commodity. A ticket for a sporting event is too late to sell tickets for the regular season for the NHL this year. That opportunity perishes when the sport event begins. And a seat in a college class perishes after that drop-down deadline ends, right?

And then sport also claims to have an unpredictable outcome. And the outcome of a sport event is unknown at the time of purchase. But the same can be said about college students who are unable to predict the outcome of their experience. They may have rankings to rely on, but they may not know if they're going to have a positive or negative experience in higher education.

So I encourage more of you to consider opportunities in higher education administration. You have a lot more of a background than, say, areas like philosophy or chemistry that are going to relate well to higher education administration.

Another indicator of growing reputation of sport management among our scholarly peers is the increasing number of sport management scholars who have been inducted as fellows into our national academy, the National Academy of Kinesiology. Universities often tout the National Academy members they have among their faculty, and to my knowledge, the National Academy of Kinesiology is the only national academy in the U.S. for which four management faculty are eligible for election.

The National Academy of Kinesiology has roots back to 1904, but was formally established 99 years ago in 1926. Over those 99 years, a total of 658 scholars in the umbrella discipline of kinesiology have been inducted as fellows, which is an average of 6.6 fellow inductions per year. So induction as a fellow in the National Academy of Kinesiology is highly selective and requires a majority vote of currently named fellows. New fellows are assigned a number at the time of their initiation that corresponds with their chronological place among all fellows in history. Fellows must be serving at U.S. institutions at the time of induction to be a voting fellow, but the academy also offers honorary appointments as international fellows to those outside the US, but those international fellows do not have voting rights. You see Wendy Frisbee here is on that list as an international designation.

So in sport management, Earl Ziegler was inducted into the academy during his time as department head of the University of Illinois from 1964 to 1968, and he was the sole sport management fellow in the academy for 36 years until Chella's appointment in 2002. I know we have a number of NAK fellows that are currently in the audience in the room. Please stand right now and be recognized by the group NAK fellows, don't be shy.

So, of course, I've got to do another graph here too. The slide depicts the number of sport management faculty appointed as fellows in the National Academy since 1966. After nearly five decades with little to no growth, there has been a 466.7% increase in sport management NAK fellows fellows in the last 10 years from 2014 to 2024. The number of active fellows in NAK is capped at 200, meaning the sport management faculty now comprise about 8.5% of the total membership.

While NASM, ESM, and SMANS all offer procedures awards to their members, those awards are essentially sport management faculty patting other sport management faculty on the back and so accordingly the numbers of sport management faculty who have been inducted as NAK fellows is a is a better indicator of our growing reputation among our scholarly peers.

After highlighting some signs of our growing reputation among stakeholders, I would now like to outline some of the biggest threats to reputation and legitimacy of sport management programs. First, certainly balancing the supply of sport management graduates with industry demands, balancing rising tuition costs with entry-level sport industry salaries, establishing a consistent presence of sport management degree programs across universities, And finally, the failure to clearly establish sport management as a profession.

So threat number one, balancing the supply of sport management graduates with industry demand. So what I did here is I used a six-digit classification of instructional programs, or SIP code, from the National Center for Educational Statistics and a classification for instructional programs, standard occupational classification, and a cross-wall codebook to align sport management with relevant occupations.

So at first glance, this data seems to indicate that sport entry programs in the U.S. are not keeping up with sport and fitness management industry job needs. Juxtaposing the U.S. federal government employee annual attrition rate is a proxy for sport and fitness management industry attrition, a 6% attrition of a U.S. industry with 604,000 jobs, which would be 36,240 jobs would need to be filled annually, and that does not include job growth, which is predicted to be 22% from 2020 to 2030. Therefore, it appears that U.S. universities are clearly producing less than half of the graduates needed each year to help keep pace with industry inflation.

As Florida State graduate lead course over on, it's not so fast, my friend. So I was important to note that all these applications are mapped out into lots of different subgroups. It's really hard to see from a distance, but four occupations are mapped to this group that comprise the total number that the U.S. reports. The first category is coaches and scouts. The second category is entertainment and recreation managers except gambling. The third category is exercise trainers and group fitness instructors. And the fourth category is recreation and fitness studies teachers post-secondary.

So if I go through this Power BI and I limit it, for example, to just entertainment and recreation managers, So then the number of jobs in that category is only 36,700, which suggests U.S. universities are overproducing support management graduates by a sizable amount. Clearly there's a strong need for better job industry data in order to draw any formal conclusions from this. And obviously though, overproduction of support management graduates is an issue when graduates who are unable to find employment in the sport industry force them to seek out other opportunities outside of their passion and training. If the list of sport management graduates who cannot obtain employment in the industry increases significantly, sport management could experience negative impacts to our profession.

Threat number two is balancing rising tuition costs with entry-level sport industry salaries. While there are a number of examples of sport industry executives who earn sizable salaries, for the most part, entry-level salaries in the sport industry are quite modest. ZipRecruiter reports, for example, an average sport management salary across all time to be $48,396 in the U.S., but that's for all sport management jobs, not just entry-level jobs. However, I doubt professional sport teams are using ZipRecruiter to find their next general manager, so the ZipRecruiter data is likely based towards lower-level positions.

That being said, the tuition for many U.S. universities has been rising at paces much higher than inflation over the past two decades. High tuition costs threaten the viability of academic programs with low-level entry salaries because prospective students are less likely to pay $65,000 per year or more to receive an education that will enhance their eligibility for an entry-level sport management position that pays $40,000 per year.

This graph depicts the in-state and out-of-state tuition at universities that offer sport management programs, and while the majority of universities that charge the highest tuition or public, out-of-state tuition at the University of Michigan is the 12th highest among all universities at about $60,000 per year.

And we can break this down into different categories. Let's not walk ready. very well. I need a real mouse. If we break it down to four years or above, the public universities, you'll see universities in Michigan and Pennsylvania tend to charge the highest tuitions. For the past several years, the public universities in Florida charged the lowest in-state tuition across all 50 states.

If I do private for-profit four years or above, I can get that to work. You'll see among private for-profit institutions that Waldorf University Westlip University, and Grand Canyon University charge the highest tuitions.

This PowerPI data takes that tuition data and juxtaposes it with the total degrees awarded data that I showed you earlier. So for 2022, Concordia University, Irvine produces second highest number of sport management students, but their in-state tuition was more than three times the tuition at the University of South Carolina, which graduated the most students. And the tuition at Concordia University, Irvine for out-of-state students was also the highest among all five universities that produced the most number of sport management graduates in 2022.

So, the third threat is establishing a consistent presence of sport management programs across universities. Established disciplines in higher education are practically omnipresent across universities. Disciplines like biology, history, and psychology are found at almost every university. While the number of sport management programs is clearly growing, recent research shows that sport management growth has been limited to certain types of institutions.

You can see here that sport management degrees, according to research, are offered more frequently in national universities than liberal arts colleges, and they're largely not offered by the majority of top-ranked institutions, according to the U.S. News & World Report. Ranking, enrollment, and public-private institutional status did not predict sport management degree offerings at a liberal arts college. A national university had an increased likelihood of offering a sport management degree as a total enrollment increase and ranking increase.

And so the conclusion of the article showed that sport management programs are largely not offered at top-ranked higher education institutions regardless of liberal arts or national university classification.

And the fourth threat that we have is the failure to clearly establish court management as a profession. And I think this is perhaps the biggest threat to our discipline, is the failure to clearly establish ourselves as a profession. Among other things, professions control membership over the right to work and practice with jurisdictional domains via professional associations. So jobs for nurses, accountants, social workers, and even airline pilots airline pilots can only be filled by individuals who have met specific requirements and demonstrated specific competencies. In comparison, to be a sport manager, one must only call himself or herself a sport manager. There are no barriers of entry to our profession.

According to Greenwood, professions have five characteristics including the presence of systematic theory, professional authority, community sanctions, regulated code of ethics, and professional culture.

So, in support of the presence of systematic theory or body of knowledge, sport management currently has about 100 journals, according to NASM, that serve the community of sport management. As noted by Dowling, the growth of specialist journals in particular, like the Sport Management Education Journal, the Journal of Applied Sport Management, Case Studies in Sport Management, and the Journal of Global Sport Management, further delineate the jurisdictional boundaries of the field, develop stronger links between academics and practitioners, and practitioners, and establish field-specific pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning. We have growing impact factors for a number of our sport management-related journals and a growing number of programs, but we still have an inadequate number of doctoral programs in sport management faculty, and our post-doc opportunities are still uncommon and research institutes are still rare.

Professional authority, the basis of professional authority is the extensive education that distinguishes the professional from the layman's ignorance. The specialized training of universities both establishes an internally consistent body of knowledge and acts as a conduit for establishing external professional authority. University-level training is still not required to be employed as a sport manager practitioner, and the lack of an internally consistent body of knowledge and the absence of a single unified professional association for practitioners are significant barriers to the establishment of professional authority.

Community sanctions professions control membership over the right to work and practice within the jurisdictional domains. It's like nursing, social work, accounting. They improve the quality of service. They enforce rules and regulations of behavioral contact. They relate, raise the status and prestige the occupation. NASA continues to grow, and specialized sub-discipline associations have developed, but there's been an insufficient development of a specific professional association for practitioners that would sanction access to the sport management of professionals.

And then regulated code of conduct. Professional associations establish a code of ethics that regulate professional behavior, if you think about the democratic oath for physicians. NASA actually adopted an ethical creed and code of ethics in 1992 and that was updated in 2004, but they relate to NASA member behavior. Other examples of regulated code of ethics include the IOC, UK sports, a code for sport governance, and principles of good governance.

And professional culture is composed of values, norms, symbols that would include things like our academic conferences that we're at right now, associated awards, symbols that establish values and norms that are associated with excellence.

So, while sport management shows early signs of a versioning profession, Chela Durei's assertion from 33 years ago remains true. Neither our field nor the allied fields are whole professions. And Dowling concluded, sport management can be viewed as a quasi-profession, possessing varying degree of some, but not all, of the defining elements of a profession.

So there is so much work to be done. Where do we start? The most pressing issue that I see is the need to address the lack of an internally consistent body of knowledge. Heckman and colleagues provide an excellent example of the issues that are presented when sport management programs display an inconsistent body of knowledge. They analyzed 11 undergraduate sport management programs in Australia, according to the Common Professional Components, or CPCs, from the Commission on Sport Management Accreditation. The CPCs were updated most recently in 2022 and represent the core elements of a high-quality sport management program.

As illustrated in this table, there is significant curricular variation among the undergraduate sport management programs in Australia. Only 45% require an internship or practicum, only 27% have facility management content, and only 18.2% include content about communication. Therefore, imagine the variation in the skills of graduates of these programs that result from these inconsistencies, and think about how sport industry employers might experience frustration when hiring graduates from different programs over time. Some programs might be, some graduates might be well prepared, while others have significant content knowledge gaps that function as blind spots their managerial competencies.

But this is only one example. Yet another example of the lack of internally consistent body of knowledge comes to us from the 2017 Ziegler Award recipient, NAK fellow and chair of a prominent department of sport management in Tallahassee, Florida, Jeff James. Just gave it away. In his lecture titled, Not All Sport Management Doctoral Programs Are Created Equally, he analyzed 26 sport management doctoral programs in North America and found astonishing differences in total credit hours for the PhD, dissertation credit hours, coursework credit hours, and minimum credit hour requirements in the area of research tools and methods.

So among these 26 sport management doctoral programs, the total credit hours for the PhD range from 45 to 80. The number of required dissertation hours range from 6 to 25. The minimum coursework requirement hours range from 24 to 68. And the minimum credit hour requirements in the area of research tools and methods range from 9 to 26. These stark differences in curriculum likely lead to stark differences in learning outcomes among sport management doctoral students.

My former colleague at LSU, you'll read, published an excellent article on how assessment, accreditation, and accountability can be used to promote academic programs. I won't go through all of this entirely, but the key point here is that an academic program can have assessment without accreditation, but it cannot have accreditation without assessment.

According to Reed, the basic steps central to program assessment include a statement of degrees, program purpose, the listing of expected learning outcomes clearly related to that purpose, the method of assessing the outcome, including data collected and all kinds of analyses to use, how the results can be evaluated with target values or benchmarks, and then the anticipated use of the results, including who is responsible and when the decisions will be made.

So while assessment represents the bare minimum activity that every academic program should adopt, the leveraging of that assessment to pursue specialized accreditation is very common among academic disciplines that are established professionals. It is often said that the best time to plant a tree is 40 years ago, and the second best time is today. But thankfully, the pathway to accreditation seed for sport management was planted 39 years ago in 1986. So let's examine that process over time.

In 1986, NASB established a sport management task force to begin the process of developing curricular guidelines. Then by 1987, the very first NASB and NASM guidelines were published. In 1993, NASB and NASM approved the standards for voluntary accreditation of sport management programs. In 1994, NASB and NASM approval, not formal accreditation, but approval process begins.

In 2005, NASPI and NASM began meetings to explore a more formal accreditation process. In 2008, COSMA was established. And in 2010, COSMA accredited its first programs. And in 2018, CHIA, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, officially recognized COSMA. So even specialized accreditations have their own accreditation.

So, this graph right here depicts the number of COSNA institutional members by year. Now, please keep in mind that a university can be an institutional member without achieving or even actively pursuing specialized accreditation. This data concerns me greatly. Over 17 years, the number of institutional members of COSNA has grown from 31 to 55. That is a growth of only 1.4 institutions per year.

Again, these are just universities who are just paying the annual membership fee to COSMA, not the universities that are actually accredited by COSMA. Of the 31 charter COSMA members in 2008 to 2009, only 10 charter members remain. Of the 55 current status, current program members, 35 of them have accredited programs, 11 are in candidacy status, and 9 have program member status only. Over time, there's been 49 members that have had attrition from COSMA. One member was denied accreditation. Nine members stopped at reaffirmation. So they had actually gone through accreditation for the first time and didn't bother to go through reaffirmation. Twelve members stopped during candidacy status. And 27 members never even applied for candidacy status.

So this graph depicts the number of COSMA accredited programs by year. While there was steady growth from 2010 to 2018, accreditation growth has been mostly stagnant since that time, with the number of accredited programs actually declining in some ways.

So remember, in 2023, we had 760 U.S. post-secondary institutions that reported having sport management programs. That means that in 2023, our sport management program accreditation rate was 4.87%. 4.87% of our programs achieved accreditation, and those four management programs were at 54 universities that were members of Cosmo, and they were housed in all kinds of different types of colleges, so it's not just focused on one specific college versus another.

So for many academic programs, U.S. News and World Report will only include programs that have successfully achieved specialized accreditation and its program-specific rankings. So, for example, business with AACSB accreditation, computer science and engineering with PABAC, and nursing, they have to have specialized accreditation before U.S. News and World Report will even recognize their program as being eligible for ranking in their annual rankings.

Corey Sikowsky concluded, given that programmatic accreditation exists as a means of quality assurance within a unique degree program offering, it is concerning that less than 10% of sport management programs in the United States currently hold sport management-specific programmatic accreditation. That was 2023, and Chris and Sarah will be even more disappointed to see that sport management program accreditation rate is only at 4.87% today.

So the day will actually come when sport management programs are ranked by the U.S. News & World Report, and if current practices in the indicator, only accredited programs will be eligible to be ranked. One of the key ranking metrics for AACSP-accredited business schools is the starting salaries of their graduates. And consequently, AACSP-accredited business schools will often seek alternative specialized accreditation for programs like hospitality and sport management so that the low starting salaries of graduates and those disciplines do not need to be counted towards their overall business school ranks.

So why do sport management programs refrain from seeking external review? Well, in an analysis of sport management program faculty attributes toward external review of sport management master's degree programs, Thames, Staples, and Burkowski reported the following reasons as to why sport management master's programs are framed from seeking external review. In other words, this is the excuse list of why unaccredited sport management programs have not sought accreditation.

The list includes the typical time and money excuses, but the most popular one is this one right here. Quote, we have a strong tradition without external review. Iguess my first response to that is that I hope that the program has a strong positive tradition as opposed to a strong negative tradition. But this is essentially the equivalent of a middle school basketball player explaining that he is not currently in the NBA because he's too talented for the league and doesn't want to stress out LeBron James.

So I would argue that programs with a strong positive tradition, those that are well-resourced and those that are located in the powerhouse flagship universities need accreditation and have the most to gain by having accreditation, even more so than the average program. Why are Harvard Business School, Stanford's Graduate School of Business, and the University of Pennsylvania's Working School of Business accredited by AACSB? They've got strong positive histories. Surely those three programs have strong positions. They're accredited to not only demonstrate their personal commitment to continuous improvement, but to help set the standard for the lowest common denominator that is worthy of accreditation in their field.

So why should sport management programs seek accreditation? Well, consistent and high-quality, common professional components across sport management programs, they encourage routine assessment and identification and incorporation of best practices. They establish program legitimacy. They enhance discipline and reputation. They advance sport management toward common acceptance as a professional. They meet the expectations of key program stakeholders. They serve as baseline criteria for legitimate sport management program rankings. And they weed out under-resourced and under-performing sport management programs.

In his 2007 Ziegler Lecture, Dan Mahoney stated, quote, We can use accreditation reviews to help limit enrollment in programs and to limit the number of programs. Although this will not happen overnight, sport management accreditation becomes the, quote, seal of approval, it will be harder for programs to operate without accreditation. Accreditation can also be useful in establishing norms for student-to-faculty ratios and could place programs in a position of deciding between hiring more faculty or eliminating enrollment. What a clear and eloquent statement. Yet here we are 18 years removed from Dan's Ziegler lecture and only 4.87% of our programs are accredited.

What if only 4.87% of airlines have been on Santa's supply? Maybe Dan was just being too polite, so I will be a little bit more blunt. If we, as sport management scholars, do not take our own academic programs seriously, we should not be surprised if no one else does. Sport management programs are only as strong as their weakest link.

Dan also noted in his regular lecture in 2007 that in the spring semester that year, a final four course at one university received widespread national attention in its identification as a sport management class did literal for the general impression of our discipline. For a field that struggles for respect from the start because of our focus on sport, we really cannot afford too many negative impressions. Sam said that in 2008.

And I remember when Dan noted that in his address, it reminded me of a time during my doctoral studies when I was in Florida and a course called the Super Bowl that was being offered at a private university in Florida was a subject of significant public ridicule in an article that was published by the USA Today. I recall that the article was so persuasive that it made me question whether or not I was earning a doctoral degree in a joke discipline.

This outcome reminded Dan of fraternity days when the stupid actions of one individual can reflect poorly on the entire group, not just the individual fraternity, but even fraternity members in general. The same goes for sport management. We are only as strong as the weakest program that we are willing to tolerate.

So in this 2007 Signal Lecture, Dan reminded us that no one can whistle a symphony. My hope is today that I have provided a piece of music that we can all play together. Please feel free to send me any feedback or data updates that you have that will improve this manuscript. And I thank you for your time and your attention and this tremendous honor.