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Leadership Experience #2
MSMG 60150: Transformational Leadership Portfolio

I have loved to play, watch, and follow sports all my life. I attended my undergraduate college, Syracuse University, in part so I could experience high-level division I sports and pursue career opportunities related to athletics. My first experience in this area came at the start of my sophomore year when I was hired in the Syracuse University Athletic Communications (SUAC) office as an assistant to the sports information directors. In my role, I was tasked with traditional media relations duties: writing press releases, editing record books, and organizing press conferences and statistical collection during games. I worked with the women's basketball and field hockey programs in my first year, and I was fortunate to experience numerous opportunities throughout to see what it is like to be a public relations practitioner in sports.

Each of these roles were challenging and rewarding for a student employee. However, I was just that – a *student* employee. I was only required to work eight hours in the SUAC office per week, and I would volunteer to help at occasional games and events as I was needed. I was an unpaid employee with low-stake responsibilities. My role was to help on projects to take a portion of the workload off the busy sports information director's plates, and in exchange, I was granted access to information and opportunities that any student who wants to work in sports would love to experience. I was not held responsible for the direction of the department, nor was I expected to put in extra hours or produce revolutionary or extraordinary work.

This role changed as I entered my senior year. The coronavirus pandemic meant cutbacks to the department, and the staff which formally featured eight full-time members was sliced to five. Each permanent member acquired new sports and responsibilities, but to effectively maintain the department, more help was needed. I, now in my third year with the department,

was one of the most senior student workers. I had worked in some capacity with every sport, and I knew the innerworkings of the department nearly as well as any of the full-time staff members. As a result of these factors, I was given a substantial increase in work responsibilities previously not given to students. I was added to the payroll and assigned as the secondary contact for women's soccer and a key contributor to the men's basketball team. I was to be involved in *every* game now, and the completion of work leading up to, during, and after games became my responsibility. If media publications were late or if poor posts were made on the team's social media handles, I was now personally responsible for the error and any efforts to correct it. While still working as a part-time employee, I now had to take the mindset and work ethic of a full-time member of the SUAC staff.

To a college student with no other professional experience, a predicament like this may feel daunting. Although I was nervous to take on such a substantial increase in responsibility while still being in school, I did not approach the new role as a threat. Rather, I saw this as a leadership opportunity that I *desired*. I want to one day work as a full-time communications or marketing professional in sports. With this opportunity, I had the chance to approach the new position as if it was my career. I poured my skills, energy, and mind fully into the department and my role as a secondary contact. I tried to go above and beyond in my role by pitching new social media ideas to the primary contact and by practicing the new statistics software on my own until I was the best at it in the office. Even as a part-time worker, I took on a leadership responsibility within my scope and did everything within my bandwidth to lead as best I could.

This taught me to carry a leadership mindset in every venture I undertake. Before this experience, I saw leadership as something that comes from the top. Be it the team captain, coach, or a CEO, I always thought that you have to be in charge of many in order to administer

leadership. However, I learned that leadership isn't about who you lead, it is about the way you carry yourself in what you do. Any time you take responsibility for a task as part of an organization, you are presented with an opportunity to be a leader. You can lead in the way you act, the performance you create, and passion you exude before, during, and after each task.

Overseeing the game notes for the soccer program is not the highest priority for the Syracuse University Athletic Department. If I made a mistake, I would likely have the chance to correct it, and even if I cannot, it would not halt the game, nor would it greatly damage the reputation of the team. Nevertheless, I took great a responsibility in this role and knew that my new position carried some level of importance for the department – otherwise my promotion would not have been necessary. I thought of myself as a leader in this small area that contributed to the greater whole of Syracuse Athletics. Now, no matter if it is a group project or my entry-level job in the working world, I plan to seek chances of leadership and responsibility. I understand that at all levels of an organization there is some value to the work being done, and it takes a cohesive group from top to bottom for the firm to function at its best. To hopefully reach the highest ranks of whatever career I end up in, I know I need to treat every opportunity as a chance to prove my leadership. This will only instill confidence in me and from others and will prepare me to understand what makes an organization function at its best.