
Applying a Collaborative Disc Golf Tournament to an Outcome-Based Model

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Abstract

Finding valuable learning activities for students to both reinforce or teach class material and provide outcomes obtained in real-world experience can prove challenging for instructors. In an attempt to do this, four undergraduate classes (taught by three instructors) in a Department of Recreation Administration worked together to plan, host, and evaluate a special event, the intramural disc golf tournament held each spring by the university's Department of Campus Recreation. Three of the four classes involved—Microcomputers in Leisure Agencies, Research and Evaluation in Leisure Studies, and Administration of Leisure Services—are required for students in the department, and the fourth—Festivals and Special Events—is an elective course offered by the department and taken predominately by Recreation Administration students. The collaboration among the four classes on one event allowed each class to work on the project and integrate it into the course content, ensuring that each had a manageable amount of work to do and could work on components of the project that best related to their course. Furthermore, the collaboration allowed required courses to cover material related to National Recreation and Park Association's changing accreditation standards.

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Practical Foundations

Because the Council on Accreditation (COA) is moving to a set of “outcome-based” standards, accredited programs will need to move from “what is being taught” to “what is being learned.”

The Council on Accreditation believes that a student learning outcomes model is best suited to our discipline-related goals-educated, prepared, and qualified professionals. ... The student learning outcomes are designed to elicit evidence of student learning (rather than faculty teaching) as related to the criteria.

The key to compliance with the proposed 7.00 standards (those that address student learning outcomes) is documentation of outcomes that provide compelling evidence of graduates’ abilities to the areas targeted by the curriculum. (R.L. Coles, personal communication, July 30, 2007).

In an attempt to prepare for NRPA’s changing standards, a student learning outcome-based model was applied to the disc golf tournament. Outcomes included: marketing of a program, implementation of a program, evaluation of a program, development of policies and procedures, and application of appropriate research methodology. Each instructor was responsible for gathering evidence to measure student success in obtaining the outcome(s) for their respective course(s) and thus assigned metrics for assessment of the learning outcomes including: a formal evaluation by student peers, faculty evaluation of relevant components of student projects, student display of finished work, and evaluation by the Intramural Sports Director. Two of the metrics included specific scoring rubrics: performance on evaluation instrument development and performance on the development of policies and procedures.

Activity Description

A detailed description of tasks undertaken by each class is provided in Table 1. These tasks were supplemented with lecture material, as each class integrated lecture material into tournament preparation, execution, and evaluation.

As mentioned earlier, students were evaluated using a variety of methods including both direct and indirect means. The policies and procedures project exemplified these approaches. The instructor developed a metric that included a rubric-based evaluation of the project that examined design, consistency, and ease of use. After group projects were turned in, the instructor applied the rubric and forwarded a copy of the assignments to the Festival and Special Events class, who reviewed each project and provided feedback to the authors. Once grading was complete, the new policies and procedures manual was created from the best portions of each project; was edited and reviewed by the Intramural Sports Director, and utilized during the tournament. The “best” project was then submitted to the department Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Fair. Finally, a copy of the completed project was provided to the Department of Campus Recreation for future use.

TABLE 1. Description of Activities Related to Disc Golf Tournament

Time	Course Involved	Task
4 months prior to semester	Festivals	Instructor met with Intramural Sports Director to discuss collaboration between departments.
3.5 months prior to semester	All	Instructors met to discuss logistics of event collaboration and assign duties for each class.
Week 1	1. All 2. Administration and Research and Evaluation	1. Instructors introduced students to course project, including tentative timeline and schedule of activities. 2. Instructors developed matrices for grading of policies and procedures and evaluation assignments.
Week 2	Festivals	Class developed questions for Intramural Sports Director about tournament (including participants, marketing, competitive advantage, previous year's event).
Week 4	Festivals	Instructor met with Intramural Sports Director to ask questions developed by students in Week 2 then transcribed answers and reported to class.
Week 6	1. Research and Evaluation 2. Festivals	1. Students submitted initial draft of evaluation instrument to instructor for review. 2. Class developed a list of all tasks to be accomplished (by all classes) prior to tournament, reviewed Intramural Sports Director's answers to questions from Week 4, and developed more, detailed questions.
Week 7	1. Microcomputers 2. Research and Evaluation	1. Students submitted flyers to instructor for review. 2. Instructor provided students with feedback on their evaluation instruments; class discussed feedback and collectively developed a revised evaluation instrument.
Week 8	1. Microcomputers 2. Festivals	1. Top five student flyers submitted to Festivals instructor and Intramural Sports Director for selection of tournament flyer. 2. Class met with Intramural Sports Director and his assistant to ask questions developed in Week 6.
Week 9	1. Microcomputers 2. Festivals	1. Instructor debriefed students on the development of promotional materials (e.g., flyer) and discussed its connection to course objectives. 2. Class selected flyer to be used for event promotion and created and reviewed production schedule, as recommended by Goldblatt (2005).
Week 10	Research and Evaluation	Students and instructor visited disc golf site and discussed data collection plan (e.g., scheduling of student data collectors throughout the tournament, set-up/take down procedures, coordination of questionnaire materials, consistent presentation of questionnaire to participant, and confidentiality issues).

TABLE 1. Description of Activities Related to Disc Golf Tournament

~ Continued ~

Week 11	1. Research and Evaluation 2. Administration	1. Instructor sent Campus Recreation staff invitations to attend student presentations of an evaluation of the disc golf tournament. 2. Student groups submitted policies and procedures for grading. Policies were to cover registration, equipment, sportsmanship, awards, rules of play, and event management. All group projects were given to Festivals class for feedback. With input from instructor and Festivals class, "best in class" group project modified for use during tournament.
Week 12	All	Disc Golf Tournament held
Week 13	1. Research and Evaluation 2. Festivals	1. Students compiled and analyzed data using SPSS software. 2. Class reviewed of production schedule and created a list of suggestions for improvement of future event, as recommended by Goldblatt (2005).
Week 15	1. Research and Evaluation 2. Festivals	1. Students submitted final report and conducted presentation for the instructor and Campus Recreation staff for review. 2. Student created display for departmental Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Fair.
Week 16	1. Research and Evaluation 2. All	1. Instructor debriefed students on experience and discussed its connection to course objectives. 2. Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Fair was held and included display of materials related to the tournament (i.e., overview of the event, policies and procedures manual, flyer, and evaluation tool and results).

Desired Outcomes

The creation of a policy and procedure manual allowed students to understand the function policy manuals play in a "real-life" situation. The project also enabled the Intramural Sports staff to update and revise their procedural guide including updating rules of play, information regarding proper equipment, and event management procedures. In addition to developing the manual, students created professional quality flyers for event marketing and promotion. The process also assisted the Department of Campus Recreation in identifying aspects of their own marketing plan that were in need of revision, including updating contact information and the identification of additional marketing locations.

Students conducted evaluations of the disc golf tournament. They researched the history of disc golf and program evaluation leading to the development of a valid, reliable, and appropriate instrument for the project's research questions. A

post-event evaluation served as a teaching tool in leading students through the event management process. In addition, due to the rigorous intramural schedule maintained by the Department of Campus Recreation, little time could be devoted to post-event evaluation of an individual event, so all evaluations undertaken provided more detailed information that previously had been compiled for future use.

Students displayed their work on the disc golf tournament at the department's Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Fair. In addition to the new policies and procedures manual, students produced two posters about the event. The first presented findings from the study of the event, and the second provided an overview of the collaborative efforts undertaken by all four classes.

Recommendations

Careful planning should occur when identifying and developing a collaborative project involving several courses. Ongoing communication should occur among course instructors to ensure everyone understands his/her respective role in the process. Instructors should schedule meetings several months prior to the start of the semester to allow time for changes to be made (e.g., syllabi modifications, scheduling, etc.). At this time, collaborators should develop a timeline and list of specific tasks to be completed by each class.

While the Department of Campus Recreation was the partnering agency for this project, other agencies such as nonprofit organizations, municipal agencies, and other campus offerings should also be considered as possible partners. The event selected for this project was relatively new, but it is recommended that consideration be given to existing campus/community events, such as annual races, homecoming events, senior citizen activities, etc. The focus should be on finding an agency or event that fits into the scheduling requirements of each course.

A final recommendation centers on the need for ongoing feedback between instructors, classes, and the partnering agency. To create and maintain an effective working relationship, and ultimately to develop a successful event, communication and feedback is needed. With this project, each class was assigned a specific set of responsibilities; however, each required timely, consistent communication with the partnering agency and other instructors. From the conceptual stage to the end of the event, communication is vital to the project's success.

Collaboration between courses and recreation agency provided students valuable experience in learning to coordinate large-scale events. This opportunity and the measurable student learning outcomes it entailed, including marketing, organizing, implementing, and evaluating a program, allowed students to apply course content in a "real-life" situation. As NRPA's COA standards move toward a documentation of outcomes, this project demonstrates a model for integrating COA standards into departmental projects and curricula.

References

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