

## **THE INFLUENCE OF SPORT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS ON ACADEMICIAN PERCEPTIONS OF NASPE-NASSM APPROVAL**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The sport management academic discipline has grown tremendously over the last 40 years (Weese, 2002). Since the implementation of the first sport management program at Ohio University in 1966 (Masteralexis, Barr, & Hums, 1998; Parkhouse, 1996) there have been over 200 new programs created (Chelladurai, 2001). Currently the North American Society for Sport Management website lists 233 sport management programs in the United States, and an additional 40 international programs (North American Society for Sport Management, 2003). This growth represents an average of six new academic programs in sport management a year. Parkhouse and Pitts (2004) claimed that sport management has been "one of the fastest growing areas on college campuses" (p. 3).

It is possible that the rapid growth of the academic field has contributed to the variation in ideas regarding curricular matters in sport management (Brassie, 1989). Despite the growth, there has been debate on what should be included in sport management curriculum. The appropriateness of curricular content in sport management has been documented by various studies and other sport management related articles (Brassie, 1989; Cuneen, 1992; Cuneen & Sidwell, 1998; Kelley, Beitel, DeSensi, & Blanton, 1994; Kissel, 1997; Parkhouse, 1987; Parks and Quain, 1986; Schneider & Steer, 2000; Steer, 1987; Steer & Schneider, 2000; Ulrich & Parkhouse, 1982). It was discovered in early studies that many sport management programs were not appropriate as these programs emphasized physical education coursework and had only sport management titles (Pitts, 2001).

In response to academic quality concerns, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) initiated a move to establish curricular guidelines for sport management academic programs in 1986 (Sport Management Program Review Council, 2000). The original guidelines were distributed to institutions offering sport management academic programs (Brassie, 1989). These guidelines were discussed at meetings, changes were made, and the revised guidelines were subsequently published in 1987 (Sport Management Program Review Council, 2000). NASPE and the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM) came to the conclusion that sport management students needed a minimum core body of knowledge for not only admission into the industry, but also success in the industry. In addition, these organizations realized a need to develop some form of an approval process for sport management programs seeking direction in curriculum matters (Sport Management Program Review Council, 2000). NASPE and NASSM members formed a joint task force for the purposes of identifying core content areas and establishing a review process for approving sport management programs that met all the recommended guidelines. This committee presented its ideas for the curricular standards and the approval process at several NASPE and NASSM meetings over the next few years (Sport Management Program Review Council, 2000). NASPE approved these standards in 1992 (Parkhouse, & Pitts, 2004). Since the original standards were accepted numerous revisions have been made. The current standards were last revised in 1999 (Sport Management Program Review Council, 2000).

In spite of the NASPE-NASSM curricular standards and approval process, many sport management programs still are not seeking approval. The NASSM website currently lists only 58 programs in the United States as being approved (North American Society for Sport Management, 2003). This number represents less than 25% of all sport management programs listed on the NASSM website. The question is "why aren't more sport management programs seeking approval?"

A number of program characteristics were identified as possible causes for sport management programs to not seek approval. These characteristics were identified through the review of literature and through a brief qualitative study. The characteristics identified through these processes were the academic program title, the college that houses the academic program, the status of NASPE-NASSM program approval (approved, going through approval, never applied for approval), and the existence of a graduate program in sport management at the institution. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the differences in perception of undergraduate sport management

academicians toward the concept of NASPE-NASSM approval based upon these characteristics of the academic programs.

#### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A number of the studies that have been conducted on sport management curricular issues have focused upon perceptions of academicians and practitioners toward the NASPE-NASSM curriculum standards. Lyons (1997) examined perceptions of Master's sport management program coordinators toward the NASPE-NASSM standards. This study specifically examined attitudes toward each of the curricular content areas recommended by NASPE-NASSM. The study revealed that program coordinators of Master's level sport management programs were in favor of the NASPE-NASSM curricular standards overall. There were also no significant differences in attitude toward the curricular standards found between NASPE-NASSM approved programs, programs going through the approval process, and programs that were not approved.

Kissel (1997) performed a similar analysis on sport management practitioners. Specifically, Kissel examined minor league baseball general managers. These practitioners were asked to identify courses that were important to a position as a general manager. In this study, all of the NASPE-NASSM curricular content areas were identified as important to a position as a general manager.

Lizandra (1993) conducted a study examining perceptions toward the course content areas of NASPE-NASSM on both sport management academicians and practitioners. Lizandra demonstrated support that academicians and practitioners were in agreement on most of the NASPE-NASSM curricular content areas. The two exceptions were the curricular content areas of *Finance in Sport* and *Ethics in Sport*. Practitioners believed that these two course content areas were more important than did academicians. Another significant finding in Lizandra (1993) was that both undergraduate and graduate academicians were found to favor a more limited number of courses as essential than did practitioners. The study also found significant differences among different types of practitioners. Subgroups of practitioners were created by grouping athletic directors, general managers, executive directors, and stadium/arena managers. Lizandra summarized that these differences may indicate the need for flexibility in sport management course content. This finding is consistent with Kreutzer (2000), who claimed that job tasks in sport management are far too diverse for a single curricular model.

Steer and Schneider (2000) conducted a similar study examining the undergraduate NASPE-NASSM curricular content areas. Specifically, this study analyzed the level of acceptance with the NASPE-NASSM curricular standards. Sport management undergraduate academicians were compared to practitioners in the sport industry. The results of this study concluded that academicians and practitioners were in agreement on 9 of the 11 content areas that were examined. Practitioners disagreed significantly more than academicians on the suitability of *Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Sport* and *Economics of Sport*. Practitioners were not as accepting of these two content areas as were academicians. This study was repeated by Schneider and Steer (2000) at the graduate level. Academicians' attitudes were again compared to sport industry practitioners' attitudes. However, in this study the graduate curricular standards were used. There were no significant differences reported between academicians and practitioners in three of the content areas. Two of the curricular content areas (*Communication in Sport* and *Field Experiences*) were viewed as more acceptable to practitioners than academicians. Five other curricular content areas (*Socio-Cultural Dimensions in Sport*, *Management and Leadership in Sport*, *Marketing in Sport*, *Legal Aspects of Sport*, and *Research in Sport*) were viewed as more acceptable to academicians than to practitioners. Neither of these studies demonstrated that practitioners expressed outright disagreement with the standards. However, there were significant differences on the level of suitability for sport management curriculum on some of the curricular standards in each study.

There are fewer studies that have directly addressed the concept of NASPE-NASSM approval. Fielding, Pitts, and Miller (1991) performed a study that examined the idea of accreditation. This study examined the opinions of undergraduate sport management academicians toward the ideas of accreditation and program quality in sport management. The current NASPE-NASSM standards are not an accreditation process. The NASPE-NASSM Sport Management Program Review Council does not accredit programs, but rather approve programs. However, this study is one of the closest to directly examining approval in sport management. Results indicated that 32% of the respondents were in favor of accreditation, 25% of the respondents were noncommittal, and 43% were opposed to accreditation. Academicians who were opposed to accreditation cited concerns of "loss of flexibility," "elitism,"

“implementation costs,” and “program costs.” Another finding of this study was that there was little agreement on which party should be responsible for accrediting sport management programs. A total of 37% of the respondents believed that NASPE and NASSM should have joint responsibility for accreditation of sport management programs. Another 23% of the respondents believed that NASSM should be solely responsible for accreditation. A total of 40% of the respondents felt that neither NASSM or NASPE should be involved in the accreditation process.

DeSensei, Kelley, Blanton, and Beitel (1990) looked at graduate expectations, employer evaluations of sport management academic programs, and faculty evaluations of sport management programs. Employer evaluations showed support for including a broad range of content areas in accreditation to better prepare students for the job expectations of the industry. This finding is consistent with the large variation in careers that have been identified in the sport industry (Parks & Quarterman, 2001). Employers differed significantly in their expectations of graduates. These differences led to the conclusion that a single sport management curriculum may not adequately prepare a student for certain positions in the industry. Another related finding from DeSensei, et al. (1990) was the conclusion that programs should be evaluated continually for professional preparation.

Li, Cobb, and Sawyer (1994) examined characteristics for program effectiveness at the graduate level. Graduate program coordinators and department chairpersons in sport management were the groups surveyed. One finding was that respondents believed appropriateness of curriculum design was important for program effectiveness. Ninety-six percent of the respondents agreed with this observation. However, only 68% of these same respondents believed that meeting the NASPE-NASSM curricular standards was a characteristic of program effectiveness. This result was in contrast to Tungjaroenchai (2000), which demonstrated support for the NASPE-NASSM standards. Tungjaroenchai performed an analysis to determine a “best” model for sport management graduate programs. Eleven sport management programs were analyzed. Tungjaroenchai concluded that a sport management program that included all of the curricular content areas recommended by NASPE-NASSM was a “good” model.

One issue consistent in the literature is the question of where the sport management program should be located. This issue was most recently addressed by Case (2003). Case expresses concern that sport management students from programs that are housed in colleges of business, physical education, or recreation may not receive the most appropriate coursework, if that coursework is not specific enough to sport management. Case suggests a model used by a few notable sport management programs that allows sport management to stand alone as its own college or school. According to Fielding, Pitts, and Miller (1991) “where a program is housed determines the degree of control that program organizers have over what is offered and how course offerings are actually taught” (p. 8). Ross, Jamieson, and Young (1997) found that over 48% of the sport management programs in that study were housed in departments of physical education or kinesiology. Obviously, there are still many sport management programs housed in physical education and/or related fields. Another related issue that still appears in much of literature is the name of the program. The terms *sport management* and *sport administration* have often been used interchangeably (Chelladurai, 1985). The difference between the two terms is cited in several previous publications (Chelladurai, 1985; Parkhouse & Pitts, 2004; Parks & Zanger, 1990; Parks, & Quarterman, 2003; VanderZwaag, 1998). NASSM has selected the term sport management (Parkhouse & Pitts, 2004), although some programs still have a different title. These program characteristics could possibly have an impact on the academicians’ perceptions of sport management curriculum, and consequently NASPE-NASSM approval.

## METHODOLOGY

### SUBJECTS

The term *academician* was used to describe any full-time faculty member in undergraduate sport management education. All 168 identifiable undergraduate sport management programs were included in the study. These programs were identified using the NASSM website (North American Society for Sport Management, 2003), the *Directory of Academic Programs in Sport Management* (Alsop & Fuller, 2001), the *Sports Address Bible and Almanac* (Kobak, Jr., 2001), *Sports Marketplace* (Myers, 1999), *SportsBusiness Journal's* “A Directory of Sports-Related Degree Programs” (2001), and the researcher’s communication with colleagues. These resources assured the most comprehensive list available of undergraduate sport management programs. The program coordinators/directors at each institution were contacted for this study. This population was further defined by choosing only academicians from 4-year sport management programs. Certificate, Diploma, and Associate degree programs were not included in the study.

Undergraduate sport management programs were selected for two reasons. First, there is limited research on undergraduate sport management programs. Many of the curricular studies in sport management have been performed at the graduate level and on sport management practitioners. The studies that have addressed undergraduate sport management curriculum have included the aforementioned populations (practitioners and graduate academicians) in the analysis. Undergraduate and graduate sport management program academicians may have different opinions of curricular issues. This assumption is made due to the differences in graduate and undergraduate education as a whole. The second reason for choosing undergraduate academicians was that undergraduate programs make-up the largest body of sport management programs. Greater than half of the sport management programs listed on the NASSM website are undergraduate programs (North American Society for Sport Management, 2003).

#### SAMPLING PLAN

All undergraduate level programs were selected to gain the widest possible variety of responses. There were 168 available academic programs in the United States meeting the criteria for this study. No comprehensive list of full-time academicians in sport management is available. Furthermore, there is not a sufficient source to determine which academicians are full-time, other than using the program coordinator position as a target. Program coordinators are frequently full-time positions in departments which house sport management programs. It was assumed that the program coordinator has a large investment in curricular matters of the program. Each program coordinator was mailed a questionnaire and instructions for completing the instrument. A duplicate questionnaire was included in each mailing. The instructions within the mailing asked that the program coordinator forward the additional questionnaire to a second full-time faculty member in the sport management. The second questionnaire was identical to the first. Sending the second questionnaire in each mailing garnered a greater number of responses. A follow-up mailing using the same procedure was sent three weeks after the initial mailing to programs that had not responded to the first mailing.

#### INSTRUMENT

The instrument was developed from ideas and concepts in the review of the literature, a short qualitative study, and through piloting the survey instrument. Three sport management academicians that had experience developing and implementing sport management curriculum were chosen as subjects for the qualitative study. These academicians were interviewed in structured interview format, whereby the interviewees were each asked the same predetermined questions in the same order. Additional follow-up questions to the initial responses were also used. These questions pertained to NASPE-NASSM approval and sought to identify factors that influenced the curriculum in their particular academic programs. These interviews and the literature review were used to create the initial research instrument.

The research instrument was a questionnaire intended for sport management academicians. The original questionnaire was submitted to several sport management academicians familiar with NASPE-NASSM approval for review and revision. This panel of experts helped to establish the content validity of the instrument. The instrument included questions regarding the respondents' respective academic programs and questions to address academicians' perceptions on the concept of NASPE-NASSM approval. A number of revisions were made to the initial instrument. These revisions were made at the suggestion of the experts.

The perceptions of these academicians were measured using a 5-item scale. Each of the 5 items in the scale was a statement that was to be given a rating. These statements addressed perceptions of NASPE-NASSM approval on the areas of necessity, importance, whether approval was reflective of the competencies needed in the sport industry, quality, and to the degree of NASPE-NASSM approval being a positive movement for sport management. Respondents were asked to rate each statement using a 5 point Likert scale. The Likert scale had possible scores of 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *agree*, and 5 = *strongly agree*. The five items in the scale were summed for an overall score. This overall score was then used as the dependent variable.

The issue of testing the reliability for this scale was handled through conducting the pilot study on graduate level full-time sport management academicians. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient measured  $\alpha = .90$  ( $n = 20$ ). Additional confirmation of this scale was achieved at the conclusion of the full study with Cronbach's Alpha measuring .88 on the same items.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The data were collected using the identified survey instrument and following the sampling plan. Analyzing the data was accomplished using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, 2002). Descriptive statistics were run on all the data collected. Testing the dependent variables of interest required the usage of ANOVA and independent samples *t* tests. The .05 significance level was adopted for the analysis. This level of significance is widely accepted in the behavioral and social sciences, and is used frequently in the academic discipline of sport management.

## RESULTS

A total of 168 sport management programs were included in the study. One of these institutions reported having only a graduate level program. A second institution reported having a program that was only similar to sport management. Two other institutions reported not having an academicians in place to complete the instrument. This reduced the number of available programs to 164. Each program received two instruments ( $n = 328$ ). However, two academicians reported not having a second faculty member in place to complete the instrument. This reduced the total number of possible responses to 326.

One hundred and seventy of the instruments were returned (52%) overall. One of the first questions asked academicians whether they were familiar with the NASPE-NASSM approval process. Academicians that were not familiar with the approval process were only included in the demographic portion of the study.

This screening reduced the total number usable instruments for testing the variables to 134 (41%). However, it was difficult to determine the exact rate of response. This difficulty was due to not knowing how many of the identified programs only had one available faculty member to complete the questionnaire. It was not clear as to whether all of these programs had at least two academicians in sport management. Therefore, it is probable to assume that the true response rate was actually higher.

The demographics section of the analysis included all sport management academicians, and not just the respondents familiar with NASPE-NASSM approval. One hundred and twenty-three respondents (73%) were male. The remaining 46 respondents (27%) were female (one academician failed to respond). There was a wide range of responses for demographic of age. The lowest age reported was 25 years, while the highest age reported was 73. The mean age of the respondents was 45 years. The median age was also 45 years. One hundred and forty-nine of the respondents were Caucasian, eight respondents were African-American, and seven of the respondents categorized themselves as "other." There was one respondent who was Hispanic-American and an additional five respondents that did not answer the question. One hundred and forty-five of the respondents had a Doctoral degree, while the remaining 24 respondents had Master's degrees (one academician failed to respond).

The scale that was used to test academicians' perceptions of NASPE-NASSM approval contained five statements. Each of the statements addressed a different aspect of NASPE-NASSM approval. None of the means on the individual statements was above 4.00. The combined mean for all five statements was 3.52, which falls between "Neutral" and "Agree" on the Likert scale. Therefore, academicians only somewhat agreed on each of the statements and on all the statements as a whole. The highest level of agreement with these statements dealt with whether the curricular standards of NASPE-NASSM approval were reflective of preparing a student for the sport industry. The mean result of agreement for this statement was 3.81. Academicians perceived that NASPE-NASSM approval standards are reflective of the competencies needed for preparing students to work in the sport industry. Academicians perceived that NASPE-NASSM approval is positive for sport management. A mean of 3.79 was calculated on this statement. This was the second highest level of agreement for the five statements. The mean for the statement on NASPE-NASSM approval standards being necessary had a lower level of agreement, with a mean score of 3.55. The mean for the statement regarding academicians' perceptions of NASPE-NASSM approval being important was 3.36. The lowest mean on any of the statements was whether academicians perceived a NASPE-NASSM approved program as being a quality program. This mean was calculated at 3.10.

Academicians' perceptions of the concept of NASPE-NASSM approval did not differ significantly based upon the title of the academicians' programs. An independent samples *t* test was used to analyze the difference between programs that were titled "sport management" and programs with other titles. The results of the *t* test were not statistically significant.

The next characteristic measured if differences in perception existed between academicians from programs housed in different academic colleges. Colleges of business, education, physical education, a combination category, and the "other" category were used as possible answers in the analysis. The rest of the college titles had to be excluded because of an insufficient number of responses in those categories. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used as the testing procedure. ANOVA revealed that no significant differences in perception of approval existed between academicians based on which college houses their respective sport management programs.

Results for measuring perceptions of the approval process based on approval status of the academician's program revealed a significant finding. Since NASPE-NASSM approval can take several months to complete, it was not sufficient to only have only two category options for program approval ("not approved" and "approved"). A third category of program approval was possible for programs that were currently going through the approval process. There was also the possibility that some programs had never sought approval. Programs that have not ever applied for approval may have substantially different perceptions of approval than programs that were "not approved." Therefore, a fourth category of program approval was possible for programs that "never applied for approval." Programs that may have been denied approval or were no longer approved would still select the "not approved" option on the survey. However, there were not a sufficient number of responses in the "not approved" category to include in the final analysis. In response to these facts, only three levels of program approval status were possible in this portion of the analysis.

There was a significant difference found in perceptions based on the level of approval of the sport management programs. ANOVA procedures revealed statistics of  $F(2,124) = 4.179$ ,  $p = .018$ . *Tukey HSD* revealed that academicians from programs that had never been approved had significantly different perceptions of the NASPE-NASSM approval process than did programs that were fully approved. Academicians from programs that have never applied for NASPE-NASSM approval scored significantly lower on their level of agreement with the concept of NASPE-NASSM approval. Academicians from programs that have already achieved full NASPE-NASSM approval are in stronger agreement with approval. There were no significant differences in perceptions of the academicians from programs going through the approval process with academicians from the other two groups (fully approved programs and programs that had never sought approval).

Differences in perception were measured by whether a graduate program in sport management was offered at the academicians' institutions. An independent samples *t* test was used for this analysis. Results from the *t* test revealed that perceptions among academicians were not significantly different based on whether or not a graduate program in sport management was offered.

In addition to asking which college housed the academicians' sport management program, academicians were asked which college should house a sport management program. Forty-eight (35.8%) of the respondents selected the college of business, while another 26 (19.4%) respondents chose colleges of sport science. Twenty-seven (20.1%) respondents selected "other" as their choice of college. A variety of written responses appeared in the "other" category. The two most common written responses in the "other" category were that sport management programs could be housed in any college and also that sport management programs should be housed in multiple colleges. Nineteen (14.2%) respondents selected colleges of physical education. Colleges of exercise science/kinesiology and colleges of education received seven (5.2%) and five (3.7%) responses respectively. Another two (1.5%) respondents left this question blank.

Academicians from programs that were not approved were asked why their programs were not approved. Twenty-four (24%) respondents selected "other" as their reason for not having an approved program. The most common written answer given in the "other" category was not having enough faculty. Sixteen (16%) academicians felt that NASPE-NASSM approval did not benefit their programs. Another thirteen (13%) academicians cited cost restrictions as the reason their programs were not approved. Six academicians (6%) claimed that curricular changes were difficult to achieve at their institutions. Disagreement with the standards (2 responses), failing the approval process (2 responses), and disagreement with the approval process (1 response) were the least cited reasons for not being an approved program. A total of twelve (12%) of the respondents had multiple reasons for their sport management programs not being approved. Sixteen (16%) respondents opted to leave this question blank.

## DISCUSSION

This study was intended to determine academicians' perceptions of the concept of NASPE-NASSM approval based upon the characteristics of the sport management programs. Overall, academicians agreed with the concept of NASPE-NASSM approval. However, none of the levels of agreement on each of the statements making up the scale were above a 4.00. These findings demonstrate that although agreement with NASPE-NASSM approval exists, that agreement level is marginal.

There was little difference in perception among sport management academicians based on the title of academicians' programs. Although there were no previous studies that directly examined these criteria, the lack of differences in perception are consistent with what was stated in Chelladurai (1985), claiming very little distinction between programs with different titles. There were also no significant differences in perception between academicians based on where their academic program was housed. Pitts (2001) and later Case (2003) expressed a concern of the college housing the program having an influence on curricular decisions. This study demonstrated support that the college housing the program does not influence academicians' perceptions of NASPE-NASSM approval. This result does not rule out the possibility that the college housing the sport management program may affect curriculum. However, since curricular decisions are at times based on academicians' perceptions, the current study does not support that the housing college influences those perceptions. Academicians were also asked what college should house a sport management program. Academicians heavily favored a college of business. This rate of response is consistent with findings in earlier studies and related articles that demonstrated the need for a strong business orientation in sport management (Cuneen, 1992; Hardy, 1987; Kreutzer, 1991; Sawyer, 1993; Whiddon, 1990). Based upon these perceptions, institutions implementing new sport management programs should do so in colleges of business.

There were no significant differences in perceptions found based on whether a graduate program in sport management was offered. This characteristic was investigated upon suggestions given through the qualitative pilot study used to formulate the questionnaire and through the differences found between graduate and undergraduate academicians in Schneider and Steer (2000) and Steer and Schneider (2000). Each of these studies found differences between academician and practitioner perceptions of the NASPE-NASSM curricular standards. Therefore, it was assumed that academicians from institutions that housed both undergraduate and graduate sport management programs may have different perceptions of approval than academicians from institutions with only an undergraduate program. However, the current study did not support that assumption.

Perceptions of the approval process were significantly different based on the status of NASPE-NASSM approval of the academicians' programs. This finding was inconsistent with an earlier related finding in Lyons (1997). Lyons found that graduate academicians' perceptions of the curricular standards of NASPE-NASSM were not significantly different based on the status of program approval. In the current study, academicians from programs that had never applied for NASPE-NASSM approval had a significantly lower level of agreement with the approval process than did academicians from programs that had received full approval. Although, there was a follow-up question as to why these academicians' programs were not approved, the most common response given was provided in a write-in option. Not having enough faculty members was the most frequent write-in answer to this question. Only one academician disagreed with the approval process.

On the surface it appears that academicians may be content with approval, but sixteen academicians did not feel NASPE-NASSM approval benefits their respective programs and another twelve academicians had multiple reasons for not applying for approval. It is clear from the current study that academicians' perceptions of NASPE-NASSM approval are based primarily on whether their program has chosen to become an approved sport management program. Supporters of NASPE-NASSM approval should attempt to educate the sport management profession as to the benefits being an approved sport management program. Statistically-driven data is needed to demonstrate any such benefits that exist. There should also be statistics presented for how the NASPE-NASSM standards for approval were formulated.

Previous studies (DeSensei, Kelley, Blanton, & Beitel, 1990; Kissel, 1997; Lizandra, 1993; Schneider & Steer 2000; Steer & Schneider, 2000) have examined practitioner perceptions of the NASPE-NASSM curricular standards. Since most of the standards were fully supported in these studies, supporters of approval should use these studies as an additional means of educating those academicians that do not support NASPE-NASSM approval. Any data to

support the basis for creation of the approval process would be helpful in this regard. This data may convince academicians who have not sought approval for their programs to perceive NASPE-NASSM approval in a more positive manner. Future study is needed on this topic and specifically on why more programs have never applied for approval.

The fact that 36 (21%) of the respondents were unfamiliar with the approval process was an interesting finding. NASPE-NASSM approval is the only form of curricular model available to the sport management academic discipline. Therefore, it was presumed that most, if not all of the sport management academicians would be aware of the process. However, this finding demonstrates support that total awareness is not the case. Supporters of NASPE-NASSM approval should attempt to make these parties aware. Academicians who are currently unaware could reach a conclusion regarding NASPE-NASSM approval if they in fact knew about approval. An effort to reach these academicians could be made through a direct mailing of information regarding approval.

In summary, only one of the four characteristics that were measured could be attributed to academicians' perceptual differences of the concept of NASPE-NASSM approval. Academicians from programs that had never applied for NASPE-NASSM approval had significantly lower levels of agreement with the concept of approval than did academicians from programs that were fully approved. These results identified a key factor for which sport management academicians are less likely to seek approval for their programs. Proponents NASPE-NASSM approval can use this information to guide future decisions of how the benefits of approval can be better communicated to these academicians.

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