

A Game-Changing Approach to Sport Management

University of Missouri-St. Louis Students Score Internships & Tee-Up Career Paths with WorkInSports' Sports Career Game Plan



ORGANIZATION



SOLUTION

Sports Career Game Plan from WorkInSports

RESULTS



74% of students have earned sports internships, with:

- **3,500+** internship hours in three semesters
- **20+** total internship offers
- **25+** job interviews

Background

The **University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL)**, Eastern Missouri's largest public research university, offers a Bachelor of Science in Sport Management – an interdisciplinary, professional degree program that prepares students for sport-related careers. Focusing on both educational-community athletics and sports business, UMSL's Sport Management Program provides the knowledge, skills, and practical experiences needed for employment in the sports industry.

With 19 enrolled undergraduates, UMSL's Sport Management Program officially launched in the fall semester of 2020. The program is led by Dr. Karen Boleska, Assistant Teaching Professor and the university's first-ever Director of Sport Management.

Challenges & Opportunities

As the director of a brand-new program, Dr. Boleska brought a unique approach to teaching to UMSL. That approach involved a mix of media in her curriculum – students learn through videos, podcasts, and audio content, rather than through traditional textbooks and articles alone.

Dr. Boleska also brought a game-changing perspective for how to best prepare students for their future careers. While teaching in higher education, Dr. Boleska noticed a gap in the classroom and internships within the sports industry – students weren't taught the soft skills needed to stand out from the competition in their job searches. Tasks like writing a resume, networking, and following up after job interviews were often left out of sports academia. However, these practices are critical to landing highly coveted internships and their first job in the sports industry.

"When you get out of college, it's not always about what you know, but who you know," Dr. Boleska said. "A lot of people in the sports industry are willing to network, but students don't know how to do it – no one is talking about those skills."

To bridge the skills gap and provide an engaging curriculum that would benefit UMSL long term, Dr. Boleska built UMSL's Sport Management Program around WorkInSports' Sports Career Game Plan.

Solutions

The **WorkInSports Sports Career Game Plan** is a comprehensive online course designed to equip students with the strategies and tactics needed to stand out for sports industry jobs. Developed under the guidance of 20-year sports industry veteran Brian Clapp, who consulted with hundreds of active

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- Dr. Karen Boleska
Assistant Teaching Professor &
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*University of
Missouri-St Louis*

sports executives and hiring managers to create the course, Sports Career Game Plan is broken into four modules: Gaining the Right Experience, Building and Maintaining Your Network, Mastering Your Resume, Cover Letter and Personal Brand, and Interviewing for Jobs and Internships.

Each module consists of exclusive videos, firsthand advice from industry experts, hand-selected audio files, **120+ engaging career advice articles, worksheets, checklists, and quizzes**. All materials are accessible online 24/7, making Sports Career Game Plan a perfect solution for maximizing virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. And, at just \$50 per student, the program is cost-effective.

Already familiar with Sports Career Game Plan from her past role and ongoing relationship with the team at WorkInSports, Dr. Boleska knew the course would integrate well with UMSL's fledgling Sport Management Program. Now, completion of the modules accounts for 10% of a student's grade, making Sports Career Game Plan an essential component of UMSL's program.

As students progress through each module, they discuss the actionable advice they receive, sometimes via reflection videos, and share in a LinkedIn discussion group how they are applying their learnings to their job searches. The interviewing module, for example, reiterates the importance of following up, dressing professionally, and sending thank-you notes – new concepts for young job seekers.

Dr. Boleska also supplements modules with the WorkInSports podcast or relevant interviews with sports industry experts to reiterate key points and fuel timely conversations. In addition, Sports Career Game Plan emphasized the importance of building one's network early, which led Dr. Boleska to host over 40 guest speakers in the classroom during the first two semesters.

Results

With the WorkInSports Sports Career Game Plan, UMSL's Sport Management Program is off to a running start. Of the 19 students in the first year of the program, **14 have scored internships**. In total, Dr. Boleska's students have received **20+ internship offers** and participated in **25+ job interviews**. During the program's first summer, 12 students have accepted internship positions across the country. Students have accepted positions in Texas, Illinois, and in the St Louis area.

Moreover, Dr. Boleska estimates that students will have completed over **3,500 internship hours** in the first three semesters of the Sport Management Program's existence. Internships have involved roles with gameday operations, production, ticketing, marketing, social media, and more with professional sports teams, college programs, summer camps, and UMSL's athletic department.

“It's easy for the students to buy into Sports Career Game Plan because they're seeing the success of their peers,” Dr. Boleska said. “The students are very receptive to the program. It's working!”

Students also conduct one-on-one informational interviews with sport professionals throughout the semester. Dr. Boleska discussed how apparent the knowledge the students are gaining with Sports Career Game Plan has created such confidence as they begin their careers in the sports world.



WHAT STUDENTS ARE SAYING

"The program was a huge reason why I got [my] internships."

"Easy to absorb the information."

"Worth it!"

"I've been learning tips and tricks for networking better."

"Very user-friendly with practical and useful information."

When asked what they like most about Sports Career Game Plan, UMSL students applauded its ease of use and the convenience of accessing all the information in one place at any time. Students especially like how the information is presented through various types of visuals and media, keeping the course interesting."

Eddie C., a rising UMSL junior preparing for an internship with a professional baseball team, is interested in a future career in corporate sales for sports organizations. He credits Sports Career Game Plan with helping him build his professional network, stand out in his internship search, and go "above and beyond" while on the job.

Eddie appreciates that Sports Career Game Plan offers plenty of seemingly small job search tips and tricks that make a huge difference. For instance, Sports Career Game Plan suggests applicants begin their internship search by looking at job descriptions for a role and then figuring out how to get those skills to qualify.

Rising senior, Alonso A., is also preparing for two internships in the coming months. "The [Sports Career Game Plan] program was a huge reason why I got those internships," he said. "I'm looking to go everywhere I can and utilize everything I've learned from SCGP to my advantage."

Alonso noted that the tips from Sports Career Game Plan gave him the confidence and the right mindset to ace his internship-winning interview with a collegiate baseball team.

What's Next

Looking forward, Dr. Boleska and UMSL will continue using Sports Career Game Plan and have 21 students registered for the program in the fall of 2021. However, the benefits of Sports Career Game Plan don't stop after graduation: Students enjoy unlimited lifetime access to the course and automatically receive updates to the modules – ensuring the information is always fresh – as they pursue their sports careers.

Because Sports Career Game Plan is available online, students can hold internships around the country and still learn virtually. This opens up even more possibilities for job opportunities and networking.

Most importantly, Sports Career Game Plan has laid the foundation for UMSL's Sport Management program to evolve and grow. Bringing a practical approach to the program, Sports Career Game Plan and WorkInSports have formed a lasting, mutually beneficial relationship with UMSL. Now, UMSL is well-positioned to build the next generation of sports industry professionals and establish itself as a leader in Sport Management education.

"Sports Career Game Plan has been phenomenal," Dr. Boleska said. "My goal is to fill the gaps in the education system and addressing job search strategies is one of these gaps in the sports world. The students have embraced Sports Career Game Plan."



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Since 2000, Phoenix-based WorkInSports has been widely recognized as the #1 source for jobs in the sports industry. With over 8,000 sports employers nationwide actively posting their latest openings, WorkInSports has helped thousands of job seekers follow their passion and discover their dream career in sports. WorkInSports is part of the iHire family of industry-focused talent communities. Visit www.WorkInSports.com for more information.

