Dear Master of Sports Leadership Alumni,

Another exciting academic year has come to a close, with a record number of students earning their Master of Sports Leadership degrees at the spring graduation. There is plenty to reflect upon as our students and alumni continue to raise the bar of achievement in the classroom and in their respective careers in the sports industry.

The first-ever Winter Institute at our Northeastern-Charlotte campus welcomed 20 students to the Queen's City. The week was filled with rich academic thought and dialogue and unique experiential learning opportunities in the Charlotte sports community.

In this issue we recognize MSL alumni leaders in the non-profit side of the sports industry. The foundation of the Master of Sports Leadership program is built around social justice and corporate responsibility and we celebrate the positive impact that our alumni have made across this sector.

The continued growth of the program has resulted in us welcoming Dr. Pam Wojnar to the full-time faculty. We are fortunate to bring on a scholar-practitioner with her level of academic knowledge and industry experience in the sports industry.

To give students more direction in the curriculum, we have created concentrations within the degree focused on Collegiate Athletics Administration and Professional Sports Administration. As a pathway into the MSL program, we have also created Graduate Certificates in these two areas.

We look forward to another exciting academic year in 2016 and wish you a safe and enjoyable rest of the summer!

Sincerely,

Dr. Robert M. Prior
Professor, Master of Sports Leadership Program
617-943-3941
r.prior@northeastern.edu

Congratulations 2016 Graduates!

Fifty-one Master of Sports Leadership degrees were conferred at the 2016 Northeastern University College of Professional Studies Graduation Ceremony on May 13 in the historic Matthews Arena. This marks the largest class of Master of Sports Leadership graduates since the first walked across the stage in 2007.

Retired Army General David D. McKiernan, the former top commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, delivered the commencement address. He congratulated graduates, acknowledging that as many as 80 percent have been earning their degrees while working full- or part-time. He shared five pieces of advice: be a creative thinker, get outside your comfort zone, hone your interpersonal skills to be effective leaders, demonstrate empathy in your lives and careers, and be of service to your country.

Congratulations to all our graduates! We look forward to staying in close contact with you, as you become members of our Master of Sports Leadership alumni network.

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Some of your research focuses on women in sports. How did this come about? In high school in the late ’70s, even though our girls’ basketball team played in the boys’ gym, we didn’t get to practice there, and we were probably much second fiddle. At college in California, we had to buy our own basketball uniforms and drive ourselves to away games. I didn’t have a female role model; my coaches were men. So it sparked an interest.

You were an English major and worked in PR for many years. What was that like? I didn’t know what I wanted to do, even though I loved the idea of being a PR teacher and coach when I was young. I took a circuitous route through college. It took eight years for me to earn my degree. I ended up working for the Navy through a cooperative education program that helped cover my tuition costs.

The position turned full-time when I graduated. I was editor of the command’s monthly newsletter and also wrote speeches for the admirals. I thought PR was passionate! The hours are long and pay is not always great in the behind-the-scenes jobs, which are most of the jobs. Not everyone gets those big agent signings. The hours are rewarding when you’re recognized for your hard work but as a leader it’s important to recognize when it’s better to ask the team what play to run, and, to say, “I don’t know” or to take someone else’s advice. When I was coaching, I found that I might be trying to get players to run a certain defense, but as a leader it’s important to recognize when. So I switched careers. I told students all the time to go volunteer. You never know what you’ll learn or who you’ll meet.

What other advice do you have for people considering making a move into the sports profession? I tell students to keep their eyes and ears open and pay attention because they will learn from everyone—even the worst teammates, colleagues, or bosses. Also, you have to be passionate! The hours are long and pay is not always great in the behind-the-scenes jobs, which are most of the jobs. Not everyone gets those big Division I contracts! So if you don’t love it, you probably won’t survive.

Did you decide you wanted to take on leadership roles? I was told I was a natural leader, but I didn’t always want to lead. I’m very analytical and tend to want to get to the point. So if something isn’t working, I’ll analyze it and propose a possible solution. It causes me to lead in many situations, but I also don’t have a problem stepping back and letting someone else lead, or working as part of a team.

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Experiential Network

The Experiential Network (EN) is a Northeastern initiative in which graduate students work with sponsoring organizations on short-term, virtual projects. These projects allow students to apply classroom theory to practice and grow their professional networks while working remotely, via email, phone, or Skype, over a six-week period.

Examples of project work include:

- Development of a stakeholder engagement plan
- Creation of a marketing communication plan for a new product or service
- Evaluation of team efficiency and success
- Development of a strategy for identifying and pursuing grants

Projects are typically research-based and conclude with an actionable deliverable that provides insight and recommendations to inform critical business decisions.

Fall 2016 priority student application deadline: August 26, with project work beginning October 3

Questions?
Contact student success manager, Justin Wright: ju.wright@neu.edu or (617) 373-8704

Appy:
http://www.experientialnetwork.org/apply

On the allure of nonprofit work:

Maitland: I fell in love with the nonprofit side of things while working at Special Olympics Massachusetts. I felt like my work impacted people’s lives. I saw athletes completely transform. I worked at Facebook for five years, and it was an incredible learning experience. But for me, it’s more about the job satisfaction you get doing life-changing work and seeing the positive impact on people.

Gay: Throughout my life, I have recognized the inequalities facing our society—the opportunity and achievement gaps, for example. I believe that sports have the power to break down barriers, build communities, and even the playing field. I was fortunate enough to have parents and coaches that got me in the game. Not everyone is that lucky.

Derman: I enjoyed working at the nonprofit Cleveland Sports Commission and I liked giving back. When I took a nonprofit course at Northeastern, I got back into it and looked for nonprofit opportunities after school. The USOC has amazing donors and corporate partners, which frees us from ties to a board or government funding. We are able to do what we feel is best for the organization. Everything we do is for the athletes.

On applying leadership lessons in high-level nonprofit roles:

Maitland: I use a leadership principle of empowering staff to come up with great ideas and being supportive of them, rather than dictating the way something is done. It’s about not taking credit to look good. It’s about having effective staff who respect you. If your team is empowered to be great, that’s what impacts you most as a leader. I rely on my team to point out things like what works and what doesn’t, and for them to come up with creative ideas to help me fix any issues.

Derman: It’s important to have the ability to actively listen before making a decision. Now that I’m a manager, it’s about taking in what someone says and adjusting the way I work to better fit how it helps them learn best. If I ask someone to share my vision, I need to understand how he or she thinks and his or her outlook.

Gay: The classes I took in the Sports Leadership program gave me the opportunity to develop a strategic plan, lead teams, and create my leadership voice. I wouldn’t be where I am today without this opportunity.

On the benefits of the Sports Leadership program:

Maitland: Meeting people and hearing about the many jobs that are out there—I had no idea how many there were! When I left Special Olympics, I had a wealth of contacts with people in different positions in all kinds of organizations. Also, any time I’ve needed to decide what is next, I spoke to Dr. Prior, who is so helpful.

Gay: Between working at the Center for the Study of Sport in Society around domestic violence and anti-bullying and the Northeastern Athletics Department, I quickly recognized the power of sports. It’s more than just revenue, marketing, and the fan experience. Sports have the power to change the world, and I am proud of the role we are doing at Playworks to achieve this goal.

Derman: It gave me the ability to understand what people do differently, and there is no wrong way. It’s about understanding how people see it differently than you do and how you can develop a plan that fits everyone’s goals. It doesn’t have to be my way or their way. Everything we did in the program was in teams, and the ability to work with different people in different ways helped me learn how to collaborate to get to the end point.

On giving advice:

Maitland: Get involved. If you know there’s an organization that you like, help out in some way to get on their radar. If a position opens up, you’ll know about it and about how the organization works. All of the jobs I’ve had are because I knew someone who could get my name out there. Networking is incredibly important.

Derman: Know that if you want to stand out, you need to be creative and think outside the box. Year after year, companies do the same things. Are you going to send the same letter to donors and give them a T-shirt? Or can you do something exciting that sets yourself apart, like an online contest or content that is more engaging?

Gay: I think it’s important to recognize that there is more to the game than what you see on TV. There are hundreds of nonprofit organizations across the world using sport to help others. Often times, when you think of careers in sports, you hear of getting your start in the ticket office of a professional sports team or the marketing activation department at a DI athletics program. I encourage others to explore opportunities that you might not see on TV. Moreover, I encourage others to build their own careers where they can use their sports for social change!
NCAA Compliance and Enforcement

Careers Aren’t Just for Lawyers: How Networking Can Expand Your Options

By Dr. Pamela J. Wojnar

NCAA compliance and enforcement may conjure thoughts of rules and regulations in a rather large NCAA Divisional Manual, or media reports about administrators, boosters, coaches, or student-athletes violating one rule or another. Or you may think of people, primarily lawyers, at the NCAA office in Indianapolis handing out sanctions for violating rules. However, there’s more to NCAA compliance and enforcement than that, and you don’t have to be a lawyer to understand it.

While having a law degree can help you navigate some of the NCAA compliance waters, it’s not something that’s required, and definitely not the only path to success in the enforcement and compliance areas of the NCAA.

I recently attended the NCAA Regional Rules Seminar in Dallas, Texas—something I had done many times when I worked in college athletics. However, what I learned this year had more to do with the people who work in these areas at NCAA headquarters than the legislation itself. Although I did learn more about the legislation, too.

The NCAA office enforcement staff spends a lot of time and energy trying to educate member conferences and institutions on the complete legislative and enforcement process, but they don’t stop there. They also reach out to high school students, parents, and coaches in an effort to educate them about NCAA eligibility rules before they even decide which college to attend.

The NCAA enforcement staff also works closely with athletic shoe and apparel companies and sports associations in an effort to better educate these organizations about NCAA policies and procedures. There’s a great deal of community outreach that is done in an effort to help prospective student-athletes become successful student-athletes at NCAA-member institutions.

Who does this outreach? Members of the NCAA enforcement staff. What’s their background? Just over half of them do have law degrees, but that also means that almost half of them do not. Additionally, almost half are former student-athletes themselves and, at one point, worked at a member institution or conference. The point is, NCAA compliance and enforcement are not just about sitting behind a desk, analyzing cases, and handing out sanctions. If community outreach, education, and helping others pique your interest, NCAA compliance and enforcement might be areas to consider.

If you already work in compliance and haven’t attended a Regional Rules Seminar, it would be worth attending one. They are hosted annually in different locations, feature over 60 sessions covering different aspects of NCAA legislation, and are designed for compliance personnel at all levels. They are helpful to people brand new to NCAA compliance and enforcement, as well as those who have worked in the field for years. But don’t forget, there are also a number of networking opportunities, which can be just as educational as the sessions. The key is to take advantage of as many of the activities the NCAA crams into the three-day seminar as you can. And you just might have your horizons broadened regarding NCAA compliance and enforcement.

Regional Rules Seminar page: ncaa.org/about/resources/events/regional-rules-seminars

New Graduate Certificate Programs

Students interested in exploring the field of sports administration can now choose from one of two new online graduate certificates. These new certificate programs act as both standalone career-achieving credentials and can also be applied to the Master of Sports Leadership program as concentrations upon completion.

The Graduate Certificate in Collegiate Athletics Administration program provides students with an in-depth understanding of the largest amateur segment of the sports industry. Students focus on a variety of collegiate athletics topics, including sports management, NCAA compliance, fundraising, academic advising, gender and diversity in sport, and Title IX legislation.

The Graduate Certificate in Professional Sports Administration gives students an in-depth understanding of this professional segment of the sports industry. Students acquire professional leadership skills and knowledge in areas including sports management, marketing, sponsorship, event management, risk management, and finance.

MSL Students at NASCAR HOF Tour

First Winter Institute Held at Northeastern’s Charlotte Campus

The first-ever Master of Sports Leadership Winter Institute was held at Northeastern’s graduate campus in Charlotte, North Carolina, from January 11-15, 2016. Modeled after the Sports Leadership program’s signature Summer Institute session in Boston, this inaugural week-long residency welcomed 20 Sports Leadership students from across the country to the Queen’s City.

Students engaged in thought-provoking and lively in-class discussions and activities, while taking the Sport in Society and Sports Media Relations core courses from Monday through Friday. Additionally, guest speakers from the local sports community came to class to share their expertise with the students. Among the guest speakers were Sue Doran, director of athletics for Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Schools, Mark Menshehia, editor of Sports Business Journal, and Jon Chin, vice president of Integrated Marketing for Fenway Sports Management.


Experiential learning out of class included a tour of the Charlotte Knights’ stadium and panel discussion with their front office staff, led by Knights Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Dan Rajkowski. The students also attended Charlotte Checkers and Charlotte Hornets games and visited the NASCAR Hall of Fame.

For the second consecutive year, members of the Boston Red Sox Group Sales Department lent their time to mentor Dr. Prior’s students in the Ticket Sales and Strategies class.

Group Sales Manager Carl Grider and Group Sales Representatives Matt Tieri, Travis Polio, Matt Labossiere, and Gennifer Davidson worked with the students during four hybrid classes and in virtual groups throughout the three-month semester.

Students learned how to create promotional marketing materials geared toward target audiences for specific Red Sox theme nights. They were able to practice lead-generation by contacting prospective group leaders through a mock call center and toured the Red Sox prestigious Sales Academy.

MSL Students at NASCAR HOF Tour

Boston Red Sox Group Sales Department Partners with Ticket Sales and Strategies Class for Hands-On Experiential Learning Opportunity

By the end of the course, the students created a season and group ticket campaign they presented to the Red Sox Group Sales Staff for feedback and recommendations.

“The opportunity to learn from sports industry professionals in this educational setting was extremely valuable, and we are truly grateful to the Red Sox for their continued cooperation, partnership, and involvement,” says Dr. Prior.
Clancey Adams, ’15, has been hired as an event lead at Spectra by Comcast Spectacor.

Olivia Berry, ’16, is an assistant softball coach and athletic department intern at Wesleyan University.

Jeff Bonda, ’13, was promoted to ticket office manager at Kraft Sports Group.

Brandon Caron, ’16, is a customer experience associate at DraftKings, Inc.

Adam Cartwright, ’15, is a social science teacher at Hardee Junior High School.

Katie Cash (Shanahan), ’14, has been hired as a season ticket account executive by the Boston Red Sox. Cash and her husband Eddie Cash were married on March 12, 2016.

Amber Cornell, ’13, is a logistics associate at CustomInk in Arlington, Virginia.

Josh Derman, ’08, was recently promoted to associate director of business development for the United States Olympic Committee.

Sam Freund, ’14, was named athletic equipment coordinator at Brandeis University. He previously worked at San Jose State University in the Athletic Equipment Office.

David Gascon, ’11, is now director of media relations at Bakersfield Blaze Professional Baseball.

Jonathan Gay, ’09, was promoted to executive director of Playworks Massachusetts. He and his wife also recently welcomed their second child, James Wilbur “Will” Gay IV.

Zory Godwin, ’16, has been hired as an account executive for ticket sales for the Brooklyn Nets. He previously worked in ticket sales for the San Diego Padres.

Tracey Hathaway, ’11, the associate athletic director for compliance and welfare at the University of Massachusetts Boston has been accepted into the 2016 PhD cohort at the school. Hathaway and Adam Brown also recently announced their engagement.

Brad Horth, ’15, was hired as athletic director and varsity basketball coach at Miss Hall’s School in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

Dan LaLonde, ’14, is an account executive for the Greenville Swamp Rabbits, a New York Rangers affiliate in South Carolina.

Jen Maitland, ’10, has been named executive director of Camp to Belong International. She previously worked for Reebok.

Jody Mello, ’09, is the associate manager of professional development and online education administrator for the Promotional Products Association International in Irving, Texas.

Dominque Oliveto, ’14, is the senior coordinator for Youth Basketball Development for the National Basketball Association.

Krista Olson, ’08, accepted the position of director of arena marketing for the Sacramento Kings. She previously worked in marketing for the San Francisco 49ers at Levi Stadium.

Ted O’Reilly, ’13, is a sales and business development representative for BevSpot.

Christine Pereira, ’16, was recently named compliance coordinator for the University of Richmond Athletic Department.

Nichole Pike, ’15, has accepted a position in Indianapolis, Indiana, with Reebok as a marketing representative.

Diana Rapp, ’09, is a manager for market programs at Visit Rochester.

Jay Schotter, ’15, is an assistant swimming and diving coach at his alma mater, Bridgewater State University.

Sarah Segesdy, ’11, and her husband Derek welcomed their third child, Eve, on November 14, 2015. Segesdy also accepted a new position at the Pomfret School in Connecticut as assistant athletic director and head coach for girls’ cross-country.

Billy Shannon, ’13, has been named the head men’s soccer coach at Maine Maritime Academy.

Meaghan Simpson, ’10, is the assistant swim coach and team administrator at Merritt Athletic Clubs.

Eric Stalsburg, ’16, is the soccer operations manager and tournament director at FC Boston, Inc.

Kelly Thompson, ’12, and her wife Kaitlyn O’Malley welcomed the birth of their daughter Makenna O’Malley on June 24, 2015. Thompson is the head women’s basketball coach and compliance coordinator at Roger Williams University.

Ian Van Doren, ’14, is an assistant basketball coach and resident director at Dean College in Franklin, Massachusetts.

Grady Vigneau, ’12, is a group sales coordinator at Devil’s Thumb Ranch Resort & Spa.

Vladimira (Vladka) Uhlirova, ’15, is a tennis coach and tennis consultant at Kungl Tennishallen AB, the Royal Lawn Tennis Club in Stockholm, Sweden.

Tess Weafer, ’16, has been named a program coordinator in the Amherst College Athletic Department.