Service-Learning: A Case of Providing Benefits to all Parties

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Abstract

As a result of constrained funding community sport organisations are under increasing pressure to seek external funding to support their programs, equipment, athletes and even organisational survival. Sponsorship has emerged as a key income stream to support both operational and more strategic initiatives. Since the pursuit of funding is now integral to many of the roles that are likely to play, it is advisable for students to enhance their sponsorship related skills. This article discusses a service learning-based unit of study that has been developed over four years in partnership with sporting organisations to ensure benefits to all parties. The unit combines blended learning and service-learning, thereby enabling teams of students and managers from community sport organisations to produce a sponsorship proposal and presentation intended to secure a sponsor. Improved student learning and greater community awareness has resulted and evidenced through surveys and verbal communication. Follow up telephone calls to managers five months after the experience indicate enhanced confidence and success in obtaining sponsorships. The prospective sustainability of the service-learning initiative has been provided with impetus through the interest shown by other community sport organisations and a request by a local council to the university to collaborate with five of their sport organisations annually.

Keywords: service-learning, tailored principles, mutual benefits

The incidence of sport-related sponsorship ranges from the community level through to the upper echelons of professional sport. Sponsorship revenue is a key income source for many sporting organisations (Independent Sport Panel, 2009). It plays an increasingly important strategic role as a result of reliance on external funding to support programs, equipment or athletes in community sport organisations. Management educators who are committed to the future leadership of community sport organisations have a responsibility to develop student knowledge and skills in the sponsorship field. It was
partially as a consequence of the interest of a particular educator that sport sponsorship was introduced as a core unit for management students undertaking a sport specialisation. The introduction of service-learning into the unit on Sport Sponsorship occurred with a view to applying theory to "real world" needs (Kenworthy-U’ren & Peterson, 2005) and allowing students to work with and learn from the community (Hains-Wesson, 2012; Kenworthy, 2010). The unit blends the delivery of block mode face-to-face teaching with on line and face-to-face discussions along with the experience of service learning in a community sport organisation.

Our article begins with a discussion of the need for sponsorship within community sport organisations, followed by an exploration of the value of service-learning. We then discuss how service-learning was introduced into the Sport Sponsorship unit and how theoretical foundations were incorporated within a four point guideline and into the unit design. We concentrate on the strategies that have been incorporated within the guideline and on the achievement of mutual benefits for all parties. We conclude with a reflection that should assist readers who are planning to implement similar service-learning guidelines and related strategies within their teaching units.

**Sponsorship in Sport Organisations**

The exercise of sponsorship involves the sharing of resources to achieve defined organisational objectives. It can facilitate mutually beneficial business relationships and networks (Copeland, Frisby & McCarville, 1996; Olkkonen, Tikkanen & Alajoutsijarvi, 2000; Olkkonen, 2001). Sponsorship contributes to improved organisational performance through knowledge exchange and relationship building (Parise & Casher, 2003). Relationship levers comprise communication, trust and commitment (Farrelly & Quester, 2005). Knowledge exchange is an active two-way process (Parise & Casher, 2003). An example of exchange relationships in sport sponsorship is where a sport organisation seeks sponsorship dollars to fund equipment by partnering with a sponsoring organisation that seeks tangible and intangible benefits and exposure to targeted consumers.

Sponsorship has applicability to sport organisations and individuals including individual athletes, clubs and teams, events, league, unions, federations, competitions, venues and special causes (Smith, 2008). Sport organisations have sought to market themselves more actively with a view to obtaining the necessary funds to support their program operations (Stotlar, 2009). Though organising and providing of opportunities for participation and competition is the primary role of sport organisations (Donaldson & Finch, 2012), stakeholders frequently view them as social organisations that are...
promoting the social good, particularly in the case of health (Skille, 2010; KoKo, Kannas & Villberg, 2006). The focus has progressively extended to encompass the concept of a welcoming and inclusive environment whereby health promotion policies and practices provide a mechanism to leverage sport and participation in promoting health messages (Eime, Payne & Harvey, 2008). However the context is challenging as sponsors are providing less sponsorship overall and higher concentrations for targeted sport organisations (Seaver, 2004). Sport organisations are under pressure to be more aware of what they have to offer and what sponsors are seeking.

The benefits acquired by companies when sponsoring community sport organisations are numerous. These include exposure though advertisements on promotional media, opportunities to distribute company information to participants, enhanced brand awareness and company gift-giving, affiliation with an organisation dedicated to promoting health or fitness, tax advantages, goodwill generated by the effort to provide a return to the community and effective public relations and recognition (Obsniuk & Smith, 2012). Those who use the service of the sport organisation may appreciate the goodwill of the relevant sponsorship, thereby influencing attitudes and behaviors towards the brand and connections amongst consumers, their everyday community environment, and the sponsoring organisation (Mason, 2005). However community sport organisations tend to be managed by volunteers who lack the knowledge, skills, confidence and experience of obtaining sponsorship.

Service-Learning

The concept and practice of service-learning is increasingly commonplace within the higher education sector and involves the pursuit of mutual benefits for communities, students and universities. Students are engaged in activities that focus around human and community needs. It promotes learning and development (Jacoby, 1996; Kenworthy, 2009), and provides students with opportunities to apply the theory that has been acquired in the classroom to “real world” needs (Kenworthy-U’ren & Peterson, 2005; Lee, McGuiggan, & Holland, 2010). It requires more work and greater adaptability than traditional case studies or assignments (Kenworthy-U’ren & Peterson, 2005) and supervision is time consuming (Kenworthy, 2010). The substantial literature on service-learning has highlighted a range of benefits for the university and for students (i.e., Boss, 1994; Kraft & Krug, 1994; McCarthy & Tucker, 1999). The interests of the university and students have been a common focus of such research (Cruz & Giles, 2000). There are many documented examples of Universities supporting research, teaching and learning through partnerships with community organisations (LeClus, 2011; Hanlon, King & Orbell, 2013). Elsewhere it has been shown that service-learning enhances student problem-
solving and leadership skills (Mumford & Kane, 2006; Friedman, 1996; Zlotkowski, 1996). It also improves learning and increases civic engagement, employment skills and appreciation for diversity (Mooney & Edwards, 2001), personal growth, self-esteem and personal efficacy (Primavera, 1999).

There have been few comprehensive studies on the impact of service-learning on community organisations (Blouin & Perry, 2009). The limited evidence indicates that community organisations value student commitment, skills and fresh ideas (Ferrari & Worrall, 2000; Vernon & Foster, 2002), and that it advances their missions (Schmidt & Robby, 2002). The mutually beneficial outcomes for the university, student and organisation are indicative of the need for an equal focus on the learning and service provision (Furco, 1996; Prentice & Garcia, 2000). It is advisable for educators who instigate service-learning into their units to incorporate strategies catering to the needs of all parties.

**Integrating Service-Learning into a Sport Sponsorship Unit**

The literature reviewed indicates that the outcomes of sport sponsorship and service-learning are similar in that they cannot be achieved by working independently and that there is a need for the exchange of knowledge. This is an important rationale for the integration of a service-learning program into a Sport Sponsorship unit.

The method of teaching that was used previously within the unit was classroom-based and drew upon theoretical concepts, case studies and assessments with a view to focusing on mock sponsorship proposals. Service learning was subsequently introduced to enhance student learning, motivation and graduate attributes, to provide students with a purpose associated with their assignments and to address a community need (Lee et al., 2010; Prentice & Garcia, 2000). “Real life” practice was incorporated by engaging with community sport organisations to obtain mutually beneficial outcomes (Peters, 2011).

Williams and Lankford’s (1999) three service-learning principles provided a theoretical foundation for the delivery of the unit. These principles involve: ensuring that service-learning experience relates to the academic subject matter; that it allows students to learn about contributing to the community in a positive way; and that students reflect on their service-learning experiences. To reduce the bias towards the student/university that has been noted by Williams and Lankford and to bring greater equality to the relationship, we were guided by Blouin and Perry’s (2009) three major community related concerns with service-learning. These refer to inadequate communication between the educator and the organisation, poor student conduct and an inadequate fit between the course and organisational objectives. The researchers have progressively developed a four point guideline over a four year period that is tailored...
to the needs of the unit. The four points include: service-learning that
relates directly to the unit and organisational objectives; communication
between all parties; positive student contribution to the community; and the
enhancement of student conduct through student reflection. To assist in the
success of this service learning unit a strong academic advisor is present to act
as a facilitator to support and encourage critical thinking and reflection
from students (Mumford & Kane, 2006). An overview of the unit is presented
prior to discussing each point and associated teaching strategies with a view to
setting the scene.

Unit Design
The sport sponsorship unit is a 12 week program for second year
undergraduate students. The average number of enrolments in this core
unit over the semester is 120. The unit is taught in block mode at the
start of the semester over two days, followed by face-to-face or online
sponsorship sessions that are conducted every second week over the 12
week period (Appendix A). Teaching in block mode involves introducing
a component of sport sponsorship by providing a two minute video or
media clippings, following by the theoretical concepts, related case
studies and examples of excerpts from past student sponsorship
proposals. Over the course of the block mode learning, students
organise themselves into teams of four. Each selects a sport
organisation from a list of managers who volunteered their organisation
or from student's own organisational contacts. The student teams
assemble twice during each day of block mode teaching to discuss their
class notes for the content required in their sponsorship proposal.
Timelines are established for the anticipated completion of each
component, the assessments and the delegation of responsibility.

The primary purpose of the sponsorship sessions is student
reflection. The sessions have a strong focus on student-led initiatives
whereby five teams assemble under staff guidance and reflect on: the
information provided by managers of the selected community sport
organisations; their actions and experience; any concerns; provide
advice to fellow teams on the sponsorship proposal; evaluate
sponsorship proposal; and assess fellow team sponsorship
presentations prior to the organisational committee meetings. As the
sessions reach their conclusion, the students identify lessons learnt and
apply them to their service-learning experience.

Relating Service-Learning to Unit and Organisational Objectives
Service-learning relates directly to the unit learning objectives
(Appendix A) as follows:

- Working with a real life organisation that relies on external
  funding for programs, equipment or the organisation itself to exist
reinforces to students the need for activating sponsorship and the associated objectives and benefits;

b) Directly applying the components of a sponsorship plan to a real life community need

c) Evaluating sponsorship plans by providing verbal and written feedback on existing community sport organisation and student team sponsorship plans, and

d) Communicating with managers in speech and writing incorporating meetings, phone and email correspondence, a sponsorship proposal and a student team presentation to the organisational committee.

To ensure that service-learning relates directly to the organisational objectives, the educator identifies the need for the service-learning in that organisation during the initial conversation between the educator and manager prior to the start of semester. An explanation is provided about why a sponsor is sought and how it contributes to organisational objectives. Teams of students also identify this information during their first meeting with the manager.

The selected organisations have ranged from larger scale operations (e.g. a metropolitan basketball club that comprises 22 teams) to a regional cricket club comprising of only four teams. These organisations are typically operated by a committee of volunteers whose sport sponsorship-related backgrounds and experience vary substantially. As a result it is not surprising that sponsorship proposals range in quality from self-designed approaches that provide scant proposal outlines through to informal verbal sponsorship proposals that have led to written agreements. In these circumstances the offer of academic service-learning to tailor sponsorship proposals to the needs of sport organisations is warmly welcomed.

Communications Between the Parties

Experience has shown that regular communications are essential between all parties to ensure achievement of the service-learning outcomes. This is particularly so in the case of a unit with 30 teams of students, 30 community sport managers and one local council involved each year. The parties include the community sport manager, the educator, the local council leisure manager, the student liaison and the student team. The student liaison is a nominated representative from the team of students and communicates directly with the community sport manager. Figure 1 illustrates the two-way communications that occur between the five parties.
Strategies connecting the five parties are needed to support the communication process. These will now be discussed.

The community sport manager and the educator. Communication was established between the community sport manager and educator during the first year of incorporating service-learning into the unit. This occurred after students with industry contacts invited organisations to collaborate with a student team to design a proposal targeted at a potential sponsor. Once interest had been obtained we contacted the manager to discuss the unit, to explain why the organisation sought sponsorship, the intended student and organisational outcomes, the timelines and expectations from the manager. Communication channels were established immediately through the exchange of contact details, thereby instigating open communication between both parties, Word has subsequently spread among community sport organisations and respective managers have made contact to place their organisation on a list for prospective selection by students. The managers provide a written organisational overview and where applicable a website address to allow interested students to undertake research prior to determining their preferred organisation for collaboration.

The local council leisure manager and educator. Communication began between these two parties last year. Having heard about the academic program, the manager advocated involvement by the community sport organisations in the surrounding region. This led to the following communication strategies: a meeting between the two parties three months prior to the unit to discuss targeting community sport organisations; a collaborative university-council letter sent by the manager to organisations inviting involvement; the staging of a community sport information session; and a post unit meeting with the local council leisure manager. These communications led to the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in 2103. The contents of the MOU are guided by Blouin and Perry's (2009) recommendations for university-community service-learning relationships. These comprise a copy of the unit outline, the roles, responsibilities and commitment required from all parties, details of a protocol for addressing problems and an associated contact person.

The community sport manager and student liaison. Communication between these parties begins when the student contacts the manager inviting involvement by the organisation in the
sport sponsorship unit. The student then sends an introductory letter explaining the aim of the unit, student requirements, the roles and responsibilities of the manager, student and educator, the time commitment, timeline of the project, deliverables and expectations for communication (Blouin & Perry, 2009) and student liaison and educator contact details if any queries arise. Through the course of the 12 weeks, the student meets fortnightly either face-to-face or electronically with the manager to seek advice, feedback, content and to discuss the progress of the proposal specific to the needs of the organisation (Appendix A).

The student liaison and team of students. There is weekly communication between these two parties. The team of students meets weekly either face-to-face or online to discuss inputs received from the manager for the proposal, any problems encountered, and how the real life information can be applied to each component of the proposal. It is acknowledged that students come from a variety of backgrounds and range of experiences in sport organisations. Whereas one student had no experience in the related industry another worked full time at a football league. In the pursuit of balance, each team incorporates students with varied related industry experience, both experienced mentors and less experienced members. This diversity provides encouragement for experienced students about how to disseminate information and how to respect less experienced colleagues as well as stressing the importance of team work over completion of the task independently.

The manager and team of students. Communication between these two parties occurs at the start and end of the semester. The team meets with the manager at the premises of the organisation to discuss the need for a sponsor, the process the organisation currently activates when approaching sponsors, what the organisation has to offer and prospective sponsors. The second meeting occurs when the team of students present and discuss the sponsorship proposal to the manager and committee members.

The team of students and educator. Communication between these two parties occurs fortnightly during the sponsorship session (Appendix A) and online on a needs basis. Online correspondence is initiated by us or by the team of students to ensure that students receive advice, objective feedback, that progress is evident according to the timelines and teamwork remains effective.

Positive Community Contributions by Students

The purpose of gaining sport sponsorship is for an organisation to invest in the provision of the sport, whether athlete, team, league or program, and to support the overall organisational business, goals and advanced strategies (Shank, 2005). Many smaller community sport organisations could not exist without sponsorship. During the block
teaching period students are introduced to a range of real life community sport organisation case studies that rely on sponsorship to survive. These case studies are discussed and students identify the benefits of sponsorship to the sport organisation, its users and the wider community. Experience has shown that explaining the ‘need’ for sponsorship and its benefits has enhanced student understanding of the learning outcomes and provided them with a stronger motivation for helping local community sport organisations. During the sponsorship group sessions students discuss the needs of the selected organisations, related benefits and the contributions that they can make to organisational development. As has been noted by Purdy and Lawless (2012) such approaches can enhance understanding of the value of service to the community.

**Student Reflection Enhances Student Conduct**

A number of strategies were employed to alter the widely held perception amongst community organisations that students lack motivation and commitment and are unreliable (Vernon & Foster, 2002). These initiatives included the introduction of fortnightly reflective sponsorship sessions; a mid-semester review of sponsorship proposals; student performance review by fellow students and an external consultant; and formal feedback by sport organisation managers. We have also found that when they feel accountable to a range of parties, students often engage strongly and successfully achieve the learning objectives (Purdy & Lawless, 2012).

**Fortnightly sponsorship sessions.** These are initiated by students and provide them with an opportunity to reflect on the benefits that they are obtaining from the experience (Tomkovick et al, 2008). A Student Liaison may for example comment on the lack of response given by the organisation’s manager that has resulted in the stalling of the plan with the consequence of team member dissatisfaction. Fellow students then make suggestions and propose remedial strategies. These suggestions and more importantly the key learning from the experience are noted by all students so they can be applied to their own sponsorship proposal project thereby ensuring that the same situation does not re-occur or to rectify a similar challenge. Points are noted in the unit syllabi where students need prompts to reflect on their experience (Appendix A).

**The sponsorship proposal.** Experience has shown that students tend to be preoccupied by grades and are less attentive to the extensive written feedback that is intended to enhance their learning and improve the quality of their proposal. To address this potential limitation, students are asked to submit their mid semester proposal previously assessed when submitting their final proposal. This is on the understanding that the two proposals will be cross-referenced to ensure our feedback was reflected and learning was applied. The...
approach has resulted in teams of students initiating meetings with us in order to clarify the various sponsorship components, deepen their reflection and learning and produce higher quality proposals. The final proposal is presented by the student team to the management committee when they conduct their sponsorship presentation.

*Presentation to an organisational committee.* Once feedback has been received on the final proposal, the student team presents a summation of the proposal to the organisation’s management committee. To ensure student reflection and high standards, a preliminary presentation is conducted in front of the sponsorship group session members, the educator and an external sponsorship consultant (Appendix A). Each student and educator evaluates the team and provides positive and constructive feedback on an anonymous assessment sheet (Appendix B). These sheets are distributed to each team of students at the conclusion of the session so they can reflect on recommendations and amend their presentation accordingly. Verbal feedback is provided to each team by the consultant on performance and content whilst other students reflect on the comments made by the consultant and apply relevant learning to enhance their own presentation. The effectiveness of these preliminary presentations is evident from the responses to the management survey which was introduced two years ago where the quality of the proposals is rated higher (Avg 3 or 4) than in circumstances where no preliminary presentations were conducted (Avg 2 or 3).

**Formal feedback by the sport organisation manager.** Involvement by the manager in the assessment of students is important to increase student accountability (Blouin & Perry, 2009). After the sponsorship team presents to the organisational committee, the manager completes a survey that provides grades and written feedback (Appendix C). The survey is returned to the educator to allow evaluation of the success of the service-learning from the organisational perspective and to support the recording of grades. The completed survey is distributed to the respective student teams during their sponsorship group session where they reflect on the feedback and discuss the lessons learnt from the experience. Students are more likely to volunteer in future when they perceive that their work is valued by the organisation (Tomkovick et al. 2008).

Experience has shown that providing a copy of the survey to students during the block teaching period stimulates reflection on performance expectations and has increased student reliability and their commitment to achieving the unit outcomes. The survey is also distributed to the manager at the beginning of the unit so that all parties are aware of the criteria (Blouin & Perry, 2009).
Achieving Mutual Benefits for all Parties

To ensure that all parties benefit from their experiences, we believe that the interests of students, the university, community sport organisation and local council should be considered.

Students

Students complete two surveys at the conclusion of the semester. One involves a teaching evaluation and incorporates: effectiveness in communicating with the class; knowledge of subject matter; response to needs and questions; well organised; useful feedback; and creation of an effective learning environment. The second evaluates the content taught in the unit: the clarity of the unit and what was required; an understanding of what was expected; the usefulness, planning and management of learning activities; the planning and strong link to learning outcomes of the assessment tasks. Students are encouraged to reflect on each question and to provide comments in the allocated space so that the unit can be further developed the following year.

The survey results provide evidence of the benefits for students. On average, the ratings have increased and currently sit on 4.6/5. In particular, students have rated the question that refers to ‘the assessment has assisted in my learning in this unit’, an average grade of 4.7 over the past four years. Written comments include “the unit provided a stimulation to learn”, “I could apply theory to practice that was meaningful”, “I can now write my experience in designing a sponsor proposal to a sport club into my CV”, and “I now have an industry contact who is willing to be my referee”. Supplemented by the reflections gained during the sponsorship group sessions and the standard of the sponsorship proposals and presentations, these results reinforce achievement of the learning outcomes (Appendix A).

The service learning has sometimes resulted in employment or voluntary opportunities for students at the organisation. Evidence drawn from formal and informal feedback by students and managers has revealed that over the past four years nine managers invited students as members on the management committee, four managers invited students to work part-time to implement the sponsorship proposal on behalf of the organisation, 31 managers invited students to perform their 175 hour work placement in their organisation, and over the four years out of the 120 organisations 81 would like the students to volunteer their time to activate the proposal. As one manager wrote in her survey “The students spoke clearly. They were well dressed and acted in a professional manner. They had some great ideas which I would use. I would have all of them if I could pay them all. Work experience is welcomed to them all” (Sponsorship and marketing manager, soccer football club). This supports studies where service-learning increases student understanding and potential commitment to local communities (Kenworthy, 2010).
Victoria University

Victoria University is progressively advancing its reputation for servicing community needs. This was evidenced three years ago when a listing was produced of community sport organisations with an interest in collaborating with students in the sport sponsorship unit. Leisure managers from city councils have also heard of the service-learning opportunity and want the involvement of their sport organisations. In 2011 an email was sent from a leisure services officer at a city council who provided a list of clubs interested in the “Victoria University program where students can work with clubs to write sponsorship proposals”. In 2012 the leisure manager from the local council requested collaboration with Victoria University to service five sport organisations annually within the local region. This collaboration has expanded the choice and range of prospective organisations for students.

The students who have participated in this unit have become valuable advocates for service-learning. In 2011, for example students were particularly excited to be involved in the unit when informed that the sponsorship consultant involved in reviewing the mock presentations was the sponsorship manager for a high profile Australian cyclist. One student wrote on Twitter about his excitement. We heard about this when the Commercial manager from a high profile Australian Rules Football Team who was on the student’s twitter list, expressed his availability to present to these students on sport sponsorship and social media.

Community Sport Organisations

Our correspondence to community sport organisation managers states that the proposal is targeted to a sponsor and serves as a template for future sponsor applications. Over 120 sport organisations have benefited from working collaboratively with students from the Sport Sponsorship unit. Strategies are being continually improved to ensure that these organisations acquire benefits. When numerous positive verbal responses had been received from managers about the quality of the proposals, community surveys were administered to gather evidence-based responses to highlight the success of this service learning. Since the implementation of the surveys three years ago (Appendix C), results indicate that managers are on average most satisfied. Written comments such as "We were very impressed with the proposal put forward and plan on implementing it in the near future" (Manager, rural cricket club), and "The proposal was great and we would use it as a template to attract other sponsors" (Manager, women’s Australian Rules Football club).

Last year, five months after students had presented to their selected sport organisations, we surveyed the respective managers via telephone to determine if the proposals were activated (Appendix D). Of the 30 organisations that responded 85% of the managers reported as
having used or adopted components of the proposal to seek sponsorship. Ninety percent of these were successful in obtaining minor or major sponsorship and on average $4,500 was received. As a result a total of $99,000 was gained in sponsorship for community sport organisations. The most successful example involved obtaining a major sponsorship from a food company for an Australian Rules football organisation. The deal comprised $6,000 annually for two years in return for signage to be placed strategically around the community oval.

Local City Council

The opportunity that this unit offers to community sport organisations complements the role of the local council leisure manager. In Victoria, Australia, this role involves engagement by the manager with its sport and recreation community, acting as an organiser, as a lead agency in securing funding, as a source of funds itself i.e., grants, as a source of information and advice, and as the operator of a recreation or cultural facility (Department of Planning and Community Development, n.d.). In this case, students who collaborate with community sport organisation managers to produce a sponsorship proposal that will act in future as a template for other sponsorship applications, assists the local council leisure manager in their service role to the community.

Reflections

This paper is intended to benefit educators by encouraging the adoption of evidence-based strategies into units and avoiding a ‘trial and error’ approach. This is particularly the case for units that involve large teams and organisations in service-learning. Five reflective points are identified as follows that may assist with adapting similar strategies in service-learning units, blended teaching methods; flexible assessments; monthly generic emails to managers; administrative support; and the four point service-learning guideline.

The most effective teaching method to achieve the learning outcomes of this unit and mutual benefits for all parties is an intensive two day face-to-face block mode seminar, blended online and face-to-face fortnightly reflective sponsorship sessions and on needs basis online educator guidance. Over the past years we have tried other teaching methods such as weekly lectures, online lectures and weekly group sessions. However the intensity and commitment to learning by students in the case of the current teaching mode seems to be most effective. Evidence has been gathered from student and manager surveys, educator reflection, informal student feedback and the quality of proposals and presentations. This supports the finding of previous research that has emphasised the need to design flexible courses that integrate techniques from both face-to-face and online methods (Delfino & Persico, 2007), and that the alternative methods play different and
complementary roles (Berger, Eylonn & Bagno, 2008). According to the student survey results, students appreciate the intense two days, believing that this provides an opportunity to aid their comprehension. Since all team members are present components in the proposal to discuss rather than waiting for team members to respond online. As was evident during the fortnightly sponsorship group sessions that were designed to enhance student discussion, reflection and application to learning face-to-face contact provides a useful means of motivating students (Alonso Díaz & Blázquez Entonado, 2009). It was found that the fortnightly approach stimulates teams to self-manage during the alternate week. These sessions provide a structure that help students to keep their proposals on-track, allowing the wide group to discuss common problems. The need for additional resources such as readings or case studies can also be identified where required. Online communication encourages teams of students to enquire about components or issues relating to the proposal. As another form of encouragement which promotes reflection and conceptual understanding this is valuable for both students and educators (Alonso Díaz & Blázquez Entonado, 2009). Though not all groups take advantage of online communications, student survey findings and verbal contact has emphasised the importance of corresponding with us as educators during unstructured hours.

In practice all teams do not work equally effectively, particularly where members contribute unequally to the ultimate outcomes. Problems associated with larger teams include unmotivated students, lack of team coordination and social ‘loafing’. To overcome such challenges, teams of four are deemed to be more suitable (McCrea, 2010). Similar problems do occur in the case of four person teams, though not to the same extent. We have progressively refined strategies in an attempt to keep students on track including: fortnightly sponsorship sessions; continual reminders about the availability of online support; and flexible assessments. Students are given two assessments options applicable to the sponsorship proposal with grading either individually or as a team (Appendix A). Each year three teams typically select the flexible assessment. Our experience has shown that allowing the students to decide on team or individual assessment has resulted in a greater commitment, responsibility and for those that decide on the former assessment - teamwork.

Consistent with a concern expressed by Blouin and Perry (2009), strong communications are needed between the educator and the manager of the relevant community sport organisations. Sometimes managers take the initiative to make contact. Occasionally contact only occurs after we have received the manager evaluation survey about a lack of commitment on the part of the Student Liaison or team of students. Three mitigation strategies have been developed. First we
encourage the team of students to reflect on their communications during the sponsorship group sessions and to identify strategies to raise standards. Second if the communication breakdown is not discovered until the end of the semester, we discuss the situation with the manager and offer another team of students the following year. Finally, we activated a monitoring system whereby we receive copies of the fortnightly online communication instigated by the Student Liaison to the community sport manager. There is potential to do more. Due to the number of organisations involved, one recommendation is the dispatch of a generic monthly email to managers. This would update manager on student learning and application, the responses by teams of students on their experience and reinforce the invitation for managers to make contact with us if required.

Corresponding with the 30 community sport managers five months after the proposal proved to be worthwhile. This provided evidence that the proposals were activated in the community, that most obtained sponsorship, and that the content taught at university was relevant to the needs of community sport organisations and the sponsor. However this activity was time consuming. Previous research has noted that staffs are sometimes reluctant to become involved in service-learning because of the time and coordination related demands (Hammond, 1994) and the lack of administrative support (Stanton, 1994). To avoid a repeated request for administrative support from the related College (Sport and Exercise Science), we are currently liaising with the coordinator of the third year undergraduate research program to activate a qualitative study research assessment that involves the five month follow up with community sport managers.

The involvement of local government has expanded the scope of this unit and its scale of operations thereby supporting the prospect of longer term sustainability. It is equally important to ensure that quality proposals are produced. The quality of outcomes that have been achieved by the unit are indicative of the effectiveness of the four point service-learning guideline and the associated strategies that are continually refined to enhance student learning and community benefits.

**Conclusion**

The application of service-learning within the sport sponsorship teaching unit has resulted in 30 teams of students working with 30 community sport organisations to produce 30 sponsorship proposals. Though the incorporation of service-learning has involved increase in the time, commitment and resources required to coordinate and teach the unit, the benefits for each party appear to outweigh these disadvantages. The success of the unit has been attributed to the blended teaching method, to the development of tailored strategies, and a commitment to ensuring mutual benefits for students, the university,
community sport organisations and the local council to the incorporation of a four point service-learning guideline. The four point guideline involve: service-learning that relates directly to the unit and organisational objectives; communication between all parties; positive student contribution to the community; and the enhancement of student conduct through student reflection. The reporting of these results may assist readers to draw upon existing knowledge and experiences when undertaking similar initiatives. It is suggested that the template of guidelines and strategies is applicable to management units involving diverse student enrolments and organisations.

Appendix A
Condensed Unit Syllabi

Introduction
This unit of study aims to introduce students to a variety of strategies that may be used to broaden the funding base of organisations. Students will be introduced to the processes and procedures in sourcing and servicing sponsorships. This shall involve learning about the theoretical concepts, being introduced to case studies and practically applying the concepts to design and present a sponsorship proposal to an organisation of the students choice.

Learning Outcomes
On successful completion of this unit students will be able to:

a) Understand the need for sport sponsorship, its objectives and benefits
b) Identify the process associated with sponsorship packaging
c) Apply the components of a sponsorship plan to a selected sport organisation
d) Evaluate sponsorship plans
e) Communicate with the sport organisation using speech and writing, on the sponsorship plan

Core Graduate Attributes
All units at Victoria University are designed to develop students core graduate attributes. The attributes developed during this unit comprise:

1. Find, organise, critically evaluate and synthesise information on a broad range of topics
2. Communicate with others, using speech and writing, on a broad range of topics using appropriate language and demonstrating significant control over key genres/text types
3. Work individually and/or with others, as both a team member and leader in both formal and informal teams, to complete tasks,
evaluate and respond to own and others’ performance using given parameters.

Required Text

Assignments
Assessment 1: Sport sponsorship proposal – Part 1 (30%). From the knowledge gained on sponsorship components during block mode of teaching, readings and information you have received from your selected organisation, apply the first eight components of a sponsorship plan to your design of a tailored proposal.

Assessment 2: Sport sponsorship proposal – Part 1 & 2 (40%). In light of the feedback provided for Part 1, remaining sponsorship components, readings and learning gained over the past six weeks, you are required to submit the sponsorship proposal that shall be forwarded to your organisation. The proposal needs to be presented so the organisation can forward it directly to the sponsor. The components in the proposal may include:

- Introductory letter to the sponsor
- Table of contents
- Matching sponsor goals with organisational goals – table format
- Benefits of being associated with the organisation – table format
- Background of the organisation
- Moving forward with the organisation i.e., organisations aim over the next three years and recent initiatives
- Creating a win-win situation
- Sponsor package options
- Financial gains for the sponsor
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Other sponsors and benefits of being associated with these sponsors (if applicable)

Note: Flexible assessment is available for Assessments 1 & 2. Students have the option to receive a team assessment for the proposal (100%) or be individually assessed (90%) whereby the proposal is divided into four parts and team assessed (10%) for the overall continuity of information and presentation. Students need to inform the educator during block mode of teaching of their preferred option.

Assessment 3: Presentation of sponsorship proposal – Mock committee meeting (20%). The purpose of the presentation is to identify what the team recommends should be presented to the sponsor by the community sport organisation. This includes the key components and the length of time to present. The primary audience is the
sponsorship group session members, the educator and an external sponsorship consultant. This is an opportunity for students to reflect on their performance, content and amend any gaps identified by the mock committee in preparation for the ‘real life’ presentation to the organisational committee. Students will reflect, evaluate, grade and provide written feedback to each team using the assessment sheet provided by the educator.

**Assessment 4: Manager evaluation forms (10%).** Once student teams have presented to their ‘real life’ organisational committee, the manager who has been working with the student liaison and team shall complete the evaluation form and return it to the educator. Student teams will have the opportunity to review this form during the final sponsorship session.
### Unit schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Resources, assessment dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unit overview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sponsorship defined</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sponsorship principles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identifying sponsorship benefits</td>
<td>Web review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student team roles</td>
<td>Teams formed, Organisation selected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identifying potential sponsors</td>
<td>Web review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identifying sponsor needs</td>
<td>Stotlar, Chapter 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial implications</td>
<td>Stotlar, Chapter 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developing sponsorship proposals</td>
<td>Stotlar, Chapter 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Athlete sponsorship</td>
<td>Case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Getting in front of your sponsor</td>
<td>Guest speaker</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing sponsor support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluating the success of a sponsorship</td>
<td>Case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Resources, assessment dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block mode teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching notes for each topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Renewing a sponsorship deal</td>
<td>Guest speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorship group sessions</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Reflection: student contributions to the</td>
<td>organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Reflection: role of student team members</td>
<td>Assessment 1 due: experience with the 'real life'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6#</td>
<td>Reflection: parties working together</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8#</td>
<td>Reflection: format of presentation</td>
<td>Assessment 2 due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Mock presentation of proposals</td>
<td>Assessment 3 due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Reflection: learning outcomes</td>
<td>Manager surveys, student surveys</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student team/manager meetings</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Need for sponsorship, potential sponsor/s,</td>
<td>Collect proposal if</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>background of organisation, membership</td>
<td>applicable, annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&amp; demographic breakdown, current sponsors,</td>
<td>report</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Presentation of sponsorship proposal</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student liaison/manager</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resources correspondence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>block mode teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduce self, role, organise team meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introduce team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3 - 7</td>
<td>Discuss potential sponsor, content for each</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collect required information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>component in proposal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Organise presentation date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Thank manager, reminder to complete evaluation form</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Denotes online group reflection session
**Appendix B**

Confidential Student Evaluation: Team Sponsorship Presentations

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**Completed by:**

The purpose of team evaluations is to assist students in further developing their proposal and presentation to ensure a professional standard is achieved. Your valued input is based on the knowledge, understanding and experience you have gained during this unit to enhance your application to sponsorship packaging, proposals and communication. The rationale section is vital to complete as it justifies the grade and provides positive and constructive feedback.

Each topic is graded out of 3:

1 - Not satisfactory. This topic was not clearly presented
2 - Satisfactory. This topic was clearly presented
3 - Very satisfactory. This topic was clearly presented and innovative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Name:</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective of sponsorship clearly identified</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear match between sponsor and organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear benefits for sponsor and organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Innovative ideas to attract sponsor
- Achievable ROI
- Communication strategies to maintain sponsor satisfaction
- Strong conclusion
- Clear verbal presentation
- Professionally presented resources

| Total grade: | 30 |

**Rationale:**

---

**Appendix C**

Manager Evaluation Survey (Presented on university letterhead)

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Date xxx

Dear xxx

Thank you for working with the team of Sport Management students studying sport sponsorship. I hope the proposal that has been tailored for your organisation shall assist with gaining a sponsorship. As part of the assessment for this group, you are requested to complete the below evaluation. This shall assist the students to further develop their competencies in sport sponsorship. Please complete this evaluation prior to xxth xx xxxx.
Circle one of the following on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 being least satisfied, 4 being most satisfied)

1. The students were:
   - Open to suggestions ...................................... 1 2 3 4
   - Committed to the proposal ................................. 1 2 3 4
   - Regularly kept me up-to-date with the progress of the proposal 1 2 3 4
   - Professional in their approach ............................. 1 2 3 4
   - Able to locate, access and manage information appropriately 1 2 3 4

2. The proposal:
   - Was designed around the objective of the proposal 1 2 3 4
   - Clearly identified a win/win for the organisation and the sponsor 1 2 3 4
   - Identified key points required for the proposal 1 2 3 4
   - Was professionally presented 1 2 3 4

Other comments
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Please answer yes or no to each question

Aspects of the proposal shall be incorporated into our sponsorship template  ____

The proposal shall be activated to seek sponsorship  ____

As a result from working with this team of students, I (please circle):
• Am interested in employing one of these students part time to activate this proposal
• Have invited one of these students to work part time to activate this proposal
• Am interested in a field placement for one of these students to activate this proposal
• Have invited one of these students to conduct their field placement with the organisation to activate this proposal
• Am interested in a student from this team to volunteer their time to activate this proposal
• Have invited one of these students to volunteer their time to activate this proposal

Other comments
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
Names of students in team
_____________________________________________________

Name, title and contact details of person completing this form
________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Name and location of organisation these students worked with
________________________

Signature________________________________  Date ____________

If this proposal is activated and a sponsorship successfully achieved, for the purpose of informing students on the success of the proposal, I would appreciate you contacting me.
(Educator's name and contact details inserted here).
___________________________________________________________________________

Appendix D
Telephone Survey: Manager
___________________________________________________________________________

1. Did you actively seek sponsorship using this proposal?
   • If so, were you successful? ___

   • If you were successful what did the sponsor provide?
     (Approximately how much cash or the equivalent to in kind or goods/services to what value?)

   • What percentage do you believe the sponsorship proposal and student team presentation helped towards gaining a sponsor?

2. Is this proposal now a template for your club when seeking sponsorship? ___

3. Upon reflection is there anything you recommend to further develop:
   • The communication process between the students, educator and yourself?
   • The professionalism of the students?
   • The content in the proposal?
   • The student team presentation?
   • The success of the university-community experience?

4. What was your view prior to and now after this experience with engaging with students from Victoria University?
References


IEG Reports (2004) Sponsorship spending to see biggest rise in five years. *IEG Reports* 23(24), 1-5.


13.


