

Sport Studies

A department in the Isenberg School of Management offering the B.S., M.S., and Ph.D.

■ The Review Process

This was a standard AQAD review. Reviewers were:

Stephen Hardy (University of New Hampshire)

Allen Sack (University of New Haven)

Larry McCarthy (Seton Hall University)

■ Executive Summary

The visiting team had high praise for the department. Faculty were described as “prominent at the national and international levels,” and in general the department “sets the standard” at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Students interviewed by the team described the program as “‘outstanding,’ the faculty as ‘brilliant,’ the real world experience ... offered through faculty research as ‘unique and not available anywhere else,’ and the accessibility to mentors and advisors as ‘unparalleled.’” Special note was made of the program’s “industry leading” internship program and its strong emphasis on the socio-cultural context of sports.

As the team noted, “even product leaders ... must confront challenges,” and several issues were identified for action.

- **The move to the Isenberg School of Management.** While the transfer of the department to the School of Management was strongly endorsed, the team cited several issues that would require attention as part of the transition. First, the team urged a careful review — with the help of a consultant — of AACSB standards to determine if there are areas (such as faculty qualifications or program offerings) that will need to be addressed. Second, the team made several suggestions for easing the transition to ISOM, including establishing a “physical presence” for Sport Studies in the ISOM building.
- **Undergraduate program size.** The team acknowledged that undergraduate enrollment has been reduced somewhat from previous years, but found that with 400 majors there is still “cause for concern, particularly in an ever tightening labor market.”
- **Diversity.** The team found that the “lack of student diversity was conspicuous,” and that minority enrollment of 3.75% is “strikingly low for the leading sport management program in the country.” The department was urged to continue development of a diversity plan and undertake “standard recruiting efforts such as sport management seminars on campus, faculty visits and recruiting fairs at predominantly minority high schools.”
- **Fundraising.** The team found “some confusion within the department about goals, responsibilities, and authority for fundraising,” but noted that the administration is aware of and addressing this situation. The team endorsed the department’s goal of using its Center for Spectator Sport Research (CSSR) as a fundraising tool. With this in mind the team also suggested that an individual with an industry, rather than academic, background might be recruited as director of the center. This might also provide an opportunity for increasing diversity within the department.

- **Assessment.** The team observed that “although the department clearly does an effective job of using informal assessments of student learning to modify curriculum, this process should be more formalized,” especially in light of AACSB’s strong emphasis on formal assessment processes.
 - **Relations with the Athletics Department.** The team commented on weak ties between the department and the Athletics program, and called improvement of relations “essential.” The team expressed the hope that new Athletics director would see such “bridge-building as a priority.”
- **Results of the Review**
- With two exceptions — the team’s concern over the size of the undergraduate program and the suggestion that the department have a physical presence in the School of Management building — the department and the Dean endorsed the team’s major findings and recommendations. The department reported steps it was initiating to implement the team’s recommendations:
- Bring in an AACSB consultant to work through accreditation-related issues.
 - Launch a more aggressive student diversity strategy, including development of relationships with community colleges; recruiting in targeted high schools; outreach to guidance counselors, coaches, and athletic directors; and development of summer programs in conjunction with the School of Management.
 - Use the Center for Spectator Sport Research to build industry relationships and fundraising capacity.
 - Formalize student assessment programs.
 - Strengthen relations with the Athletics department. The department chair had already been in contact with the new Athletics director (an alumnus of the department), and both expressed an interest in creating stronger connections.