The Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management at the University of Massachusetts Amherst was founded by Drs. Harold VanderZwaag and Guy Lewis as the Department of Sport Studies (DSS) in 1971. The department’s initial focus was the study of the history, philosophy, psychology and sociology of sport. Over the past five decades, it has evolved to fully embrace the business of sport and was among the first sport management programs to be housed within a business school — the Isenberg School of Management. The department has an award-winning research focus, coupled with a commitment to experiential learning, to prepare the next generation of sport industry executives. It has an active alumni network of 5,000-plus people and an extensive internship database with connections across virtually every segment of the sport industry.

In the Beginning

“Drs. VanderZwaag and Lewis both had physical education backgrounds,” said Glenn Wong, UMass Department Chair from 1987-98, who helped shape the evolution to a business-focused curriculum. “However, they recognized that physical education majors were declining and, given the sport industry’s increasing emphasis on business, believed sport management was the future. Both were integral to developing the concept of a sport management program and shepherding it through the multi-year process of gaining university approval.”

“Guy (Lewis) and Harold (VanderZwaag) were the architects of the UMass DSS program,” said former UMass professor, Dr. Bernie Mullin. “They carefully steered it toward sport management because that’s what the students wanted and where most of them were getting jobs.”

The program started to evolve its business focus in the late 1970s. Mullin was hired to teach marketing and other business-related courses in 1977 and Wong was brought on board in 1979 to teach the program’s first sports law courses. Some of these courses were the sport industry’s first of their kind.

In 2001, Graduate Program Director Dr. Jay Gladden spearheaded efforts to create a first-of-its-kind dual M.B.A.-M.S. in Sport Management degree. The following year, largely through the efforts of then-Department Chair Lisa Masteralexis, the department moved into the Isenberg School of Management and, in 2010, across virtually every segment of the sport industry.

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was renamed the Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management after the IMG founder (see “The Father of Sports Marketing’s Legacy Lives on at UMass Amherst”).

A 21st Century Leader

Today, the department resides in the Isenberg School of Management, which is currently ranked by U.S. News and World Report as the 30th best public business school in the country for undergraduate education. The Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management’s graduate program has been ranked by sport management educators as No. 1 in the world five of the past six years.

The program’s success starts with its internationally-renowned faculty (see “UMass Amherst’s Research Excellence Impacts Academia and Industry”). “We have 14 full-time faculty members,” said UMass Amherst Department Chair Steve McKelvey and Professor. “Our classes are taught by subject matter experts who, informed by their research, can go deep into their subject areas. Most of our faculty members bring extensive industry experience and connections to their classes.”

The program’s excellence continues with the courses offered to students. “We were among the early movers in adding sport analytics classes, both on the business and player performance side,” said McKelvey. “The emphasis on analytics is a natural extension of our efforts to prepare the next wave of front office executives,” McKelvey continued. “We’re particularly proud our program has produced four Major League Baseball General Managers — Dave Littlefield, Neal Huntington and Ben Cherington (Pirates); and Chris Antonetti (Guardians), as well as NBA GM Koby Altman (Cavaliers).”

The McCormack Department is one of the few programs in the country to offer every degree — B.S., M.S., M.B.A./M.S. and Ph.D. — which helps attract top-level students.

Experiential Learning and Industry Partnerships

Through its faculty’s industry experience, as well as UMass’ vast alumni network, the department has established a wealth of industry partnerships to provide students with real-world experiential learning opportunities.

The 20-year runs of Haigis Hoopla, a 3-on-3 basketball tournament involving hundreds of players from across New England, and SoccerFest, a soccer tournament and music festival, were products of the department’s event management class and embrace of experiential learning.

“The event management class was UMass’ first foray into classes with an emphasis on developing real-world, practical experiences,” said Wong. “These events were opportunities for students to apply what they learned in the classroom and led to many internships and jobs. Haigis Hoopla and SoccerFest required students to apply their knowledge of event operations, marketing, sponsorship, sales, finance and legal issues.”

UMass alum Christine Franklin, Executive Vice President at Octagon, has gotten her agency involved in a variety of ways, including the “Octagon Bowl,” the culminating experience in the graduate sport marketing class. For more than a decade, Octagon has provided the class with a real-world promotion brief from one of its clients. Students work in small teams to create and pitch their solutions and recommendations to a panel of Octagon executives. “This gives students a taste of what working in an agency is like,” said Franklin.

“As a student at UMass, I valued the practical aspect professors brought to the curriculum,” Franklin added. “Throughout my time in the industry, I’ve tried to reciprocate and help deliver that real-time learning experience through the Octagon/UMass partnership.”

Mike Tannenbaum, a UMass alum and former General Manager of the New York Jets, set up a partnership with the department and his company, the 33rd Team. The partnership started in 2019 when Tannenbaum needed students to help him prepare for the NFL draft for his role as an ESPN NFL Insider. It has evolved into a formal program in which students can receive credit for their work in data and analytics, traditional scouting, social media and other associated areas.

“Going to UMass allowed me to achieve my dream,” Tannenbaum said. “When I got to a place where I had the resources to do so, I wanted to help others achieve theirs.”

Team 33 has provided our students with an unparalleled experiential-based opportunity to learn from and network with current and former NFL executives,” said McKelvey. “It’s a real-world lab that’s preparing them to move into pro football front office roles and another example of our commitment to enhancing their educational experience through industry engagement.”

The department has also reached out to industry associations to increase the student body’s diversity, leading to partnerships with WISE (Women in Sports and Events) and SEEN (Sports and Entertainment Equity Network). “These partnerships have been a game-changer for us in increasing the diversity of our graduate program,” said McKelvey. “It’s another example of the access we have due to the respect and reputation of the McCormack Department of Sport Management.”

Haigis Hoopla was one of many sporting events that provide a hands-on learning laboratory for sport management students.
The Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management at UMass has developed a reputation as one of the top research universities in sport management, especially for its research and scholarship in sport marketing and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in sport organizations.

The department’s elite research status has been recognized by NASSM (North American Society for Sport Management). Seven current faculty members are NASSM Fellows, an honor bestowed on less than 10% of professors in the field. This includes Drs. Liz Delia, Janet Fink, Matt Katz, Mark McDonald, Nicole Melton, David Tyler and Nefertiti Walker.

As a group, the McCormack faculty has published over 80 articles in the discipline’s premier publications — Journal of Sport Management and Sport Management Review.

“It’s extremely competitive to get into these journals,” said Melton, Associate Department Chair. “They have an acceptance rate of less than 10%. It takes quite a bit of time to produce research that can be considered for publication in those journals.”

Additionally, Fink has been awarded NASSM’s most prestigious honor, the Early F. Zeigler Lecture Award, which recognizes exceptional contributions to the field in terms of research, teaching and service.

“We have the most NASSM Fellows of any sport management program in the world, which speaks volumes as to the quality and reputation of our department’s research,” said Steve McKelvey, Department Chair and Professor, Sport Management at UMass.

Faculty members have also appeared on NPR and published in more mainstream publications, such as Sports Business Journal, Front Office Sports, the Washington Post and others.

“We make a concerted effort to not only publish in our premier academic journals, but also to disseminate those findings to a wider audience in a way that will resonate with people working in the industry,” Melton added.

Much of the faculty’s research is conducted in the department’s two research labs — Laboratory for Inclusion and Diversity in Sport (LIDS) and the Know Rivalry Lab. Led by Melton and Walker, LIDS has four pillars that focus on disability, race, gender and sexual orientation and the intersection of those identities. “We examine how we can create a more inclusive environment for people who have typically been either historically underrepresented or marginalized within sport,” said Melton.

The Know Rivalry Lab, founded by Tyler and Ph.D. alum Joe Cobbs, researches rivalries and how fans’ views affect various aspects, such as engagement and sponsorships.

“Several faculty members have written textbooks that were ‘firsts’ and were later adopted by other sport management programs and used as reference guides by industry professionals,” said Glenn Wong, former UMass Department Chair who authored one of the earliest sport law textbooks, “Essentials of Sport Law.”

Former Professor Dr. Bernie Mullin, in collaboration with former UMass professors Drs. Bill Sutton and Steve Hardy, published the first sport marketing textbook in 1993. Now in its fifth edition, “Sport Marketing” has sold more than 100,000 copies in 11 languages. “There were no textbooks and limited articles on sport marketing, so I driven approach, and particularly the escalator approach, are now endemic to any sport business organization globally and has impacted every sport in every league and every college athletic program."

Finally, there’s “Principles and Practice of Sport Management,” now in its sixth edition, which has become a staple in introductory classes across the country. The book has a distinct UMass flavor, as all three co-authors — Drs. Lisa Masteralexis, Carol Barr and Mary Hums — have taught in the UMass program.

Through its award-winning scholarly research, collaborations within the industry and leading textbooks, the department continues to positively influence the field of sport management education and provide thought leadership within the industry.
Let Our Network Fuel Your Future

Join the sport management program that for 50 years running has produced an unmatched roster of Sports Business Journal 40 Under Forty, Game Changers and New Voices Under 30 award winners. McCormack’s unparalleled alumni network features alumni in every sector of the sports business industry and forms the bedrock of our student experience.
THE FATHER OF SPORTS MARKETING’S LEGACY LIVES ON AT UMASS AMHERST

In 1960, Mark McCormack founded International Management Group, now known as IMG, and forever changed the world of sports. With hall of fame golfer Arnold Palmer as his first client, McCormack built IMG into the world’s largest sports management and media company.

Upon his passing in 2003, McCormack left behind a treasure trove of documents encapsulating the work he and IMG achieved during the previous 43 years. Seven years later, the McCormack family chose UMass to house this expansive archive. Five million pieces of paper from more than 2,500 boxes are being catalogued and digitized at the UMass Amherst W.E.B. Du Bois Library, with a large part of the archives accessible online.

“We interviewed about 20 sport management programs and 10 libraries and found our favorite library, with its special collections group, and the best sport management program were at the same university,” said Todd McCormack, Mark’s son and a Senior Corporate Vice President at IMG.

“We wanted my father’s papers integrated into the curriculum to help bridge the gap between what is taught in the classroom and real-world events in the sport marketing world,” McCormack said. The archives reveal how groundbreaking sports deals are created, relationships nurtured and how Mark turned his small athlete management firm into a worldwide power.

“I saw a wealth of opportunities to develop initiatives to teach Mark McCormack’s legacy to current and future students,” said Lisa Pike Masteralexis, Department Chair from 1998-2015. “The McCormack family shared our vision and endowed an Executive in Residence Program and International Partnership Program, and provided seed funding for revenue-generating educational initiatives.”

Executive in Residence Program

Every fall, the McCormack Executive in Residence (EIR) program brings high profile sports executives to campus to share the strategies, challenges and rewards of working in the industry. Each EIR also records a session with library archivists for the department’s sport innovators oral history archives.

“The EIR program provides our students and faculty with the opportunity to learn from some of the sport industry’s most iconic figures,” said Steve McKelvey, Department Chair and Professor.

“Funding from the McCormack family allowed us to bring major names to campus to teach Mark McCormack’s legacy,” said Will Norton, Director, Graduate Programs; Director, MCSCRE; and Lecturer, Sport Management at UMass.

The center has a publishing arm that develops custom, real-world content, ranging from sport industry case studies, to faculty research and e-book distribution of Mark’s book “Beyond Harvard”. Its Sport Leadership Academy has become a destination for educating high school students from across the world with introductory sport management content, serving 500-plus students in four years.

“UMass’ willingness to rebrand the department as the Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management is a great way to honor my father’s legacy. It prompts current and future students to learn about the person whose name is on their program and serves as a showcase to the next generation of students,” Todd McCormack concluded.
When it comes to the pressing issues of diversity, equity and inclusion in sport, the McCormack Department of Sport Management continues to take a leadership role. Numerous faculty members have published cutting-edge research in premier academic journals. The department is actively involved in ESPNW initiatives, the Wasserman Collective and, two years ago, launched a course solely focused on diversity and inclusion in sport. The department’s newest initiative was the brainchild of alum Zaileen Janmohamed, Head of Partnership Development and Innovation for LA28.

In 2018, B.S. alumnus Bill Hubbard pledged $1 million to the McCormack Department of Sport Management. A portion of this gift was allocated to create the Tokio-Marine HCC Summer Internship Award program, which annually provides $5,000 awards to students based on the merits of their summer internships. To date, over $100,000 in awards has been distributed.

“T’ve often said the UMass Sport Management program gave me the keys to the rest of my life. While my time as a student has passed, I continue to look to the program for more – more answers, innovation, ways to push our industry forward and, yes, more keys. As I hit a transition point in my career, I realized there was still a gap in technical skillset, knowledge and confidence for women starting their careers in the sports industry and women like me, who were trying to navigate the jump to senior leadership. UMass answered my call and I’m proud of the collective effort – and urgency – in launching the first-ever Women in Business course for graduate and undergraduate sport management students. While the industry has come a long way in gender equality in sports, we still have much work to do. I’m excited to work with the faculty and other alums to expand on this course with other initiatives that support the next generation of female sports executives.”

In 2012, three current MLB General Managers and McCormack alums Chris Antonetti, Ben Cherington, and Neal Huntington returned to campus for “A Night with the GMs” hosted by another alum, ESPN’s Mike Reiss. In total, the UMass program has produced four MLB GMs: David Littlefield being the other one.
Thorr Bjorn
Director of Athletics, University of Rhode Island
B.S. 1990

One of the long-standing linchpins of UMass’s top-ranked graduate program is its Graduate Mentor Program. Each year, graduate students are paired with industry professionals that align with each student’s career aspirations. Since the program’s inception in 2004, over 100 alumni have “paid it forward” by providing time, insights and career guidance, while best preparing their mentees for the sport and entertainment industry. No one has served as a graduate mentor more often than University of Rhode Island Director of Athletics Thorr Bjorn.

“Serving as a graduate mentor in the McCormack Department of Sport Management has been an honor and privilege. It provides me the opportunity to give back to a program that has meant so much to me. But, as importantly, it provides me with a tangible role in helping prepare the next generation of college sport administrators. It allows me to integrate the challenges of my job as a director of athletics into the mentee’s educational experience, providing my mentee with a line of sight into important front-line issues impacting collegiate athletics. When I was at UMass, Dr. Harold VanderZwaag helped guide my path through regular conversations that had an immeasurable impact on my life. If I can provide the next generation of students just a small inkling of advice like he provided me, then I know I will be making a difference.”

The completion of Isenberg’s 70,000-square-foot Business Innovation Hub in 2019 has improved McCormack’s learning environment and student experience. Above, the 5,000 square foot Learning Commons

Civil rights activist and sport sociologist Dr. Harry Edwards (L), with McCormack faculty, delivering his sport innovator’s lecture, “The Ideological Framing of Black Athlete Activism” during Spring 2017 Executive in Residence.

MARK H. MCCORMACK DEPARTMENT OF SPORT MANAGEMENT PAST EXECUTIVES IN RESIDENCE

George Bodenheimer
Former President, ESPN

Stacy Allaster
Former CEO, WTA

Jay Lafave
Co-Founder, IMG

Peter Carlisle
Managing Director, Olympic and Action Sports, Octagon

Barry Frank
EVP, IMG Media Sports Programming

Brian Burke
NHL Executive

Val Ackerman
Commissioner, Big East Conference

Sonny Vaccaro
Former Nike and adidas Executive

Dr. Bernie Mullin
Founder, The Aspire Group

David Stern
Commissioner Emeritus, NBA

Jon Spoelstra
Sport Sales and Marketing Executive

Dr. Harry Edwards
Sport Sociologist and Consultant

Bob Kain
Former Co-CEO, IMG

Anita DeFrantz
IOC Member

Mike Slive
Former SEC Commissioner
Over the past 50 years, graduates of the Mark H. McCormack Department of Sport Management at UMass Amherst have ascended to positions of leadership in virtually every segment of the sport industry.

UMass Sport Management
Celebrating 50 Years

**HAROLD J. VANDERZWAAG DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD**

Chris Antonetti • Paul Archey • Sandy Barbour • Pam Batalis • Thorr Bjorn • Declan Bolger • Greg Bouris
Catherine Carlson • Jim Carr • Ben Cherington • Steve Cohen • Ted Dalton • Judith Davidson • Bob DeCarolis
Colleen Duffy Brace • Amy Ehrlich • Richard Ensor • Joe Fitzgerald • Anne Flannery • Christine Franklin • Chet Gladchuk
Jeff Goering • Nancy Gonsalves • Harvey Greene • Steve Herbst • Barney Hinkle • Carl Hirsh • Dave Hixon
Bill Hubbard • Neal Huntington • Daryl Jasper • Sporty Jeralds • Peter John-Baptiste • Richard (Dick) Lenfest, Jr.
Pamela Levine • Wayne Levy • Dave Littlefield • Peter Luukko • Burke Magnus • Dennis Mannion • John Martin
Wade Martin • Jennifer Masi • Lisa Masteralexis • Carolanne McAuliffe • Ian McCaw • Joseph McEacharn
Stephen McKelvey • Jay Monahan • Noreen Morris • William Munson • Gloria Nevarez • Robert Newman
Howard Nuchow • Jay Ogden • Heidi Pellerano • Tom Peters • Jeff Price • Dennis Robinson • Amy Scheer
Bob Schwartz • Russ Spielman • Charles Steedman • Cindy Stutman • Michael Tamburro • Jeff Twiss
George VanderZwaag • Patricia Viverito • John Wentzell • Vaughn Williams • David Wright • Scott Zuffelato

**ALUMNI ON THE RISE AWARD**

Koby Altman • Michael Antolini • Alison Cole • Scott Crowder • Brett Danahy • Brenna Dykta
Troy Ewanycha • Andrew George • Eric Ginsberg • Michael Goldstein • David Haynes
Karina Herold • Elissa Holland • Laurel Hosmer • Jeff Ianello • Zaileen JannMohamed
Li Li Leung • Evan Levine • Danielle Lopez • Melissa Marchionna • Takehido Nakamura
Victoria Neamonitis • Adam Nurik • Evan Olesh • Caitlyn Prandato • Michelle Price
Melcolm Ruffin • Scott Savran • John Schlieman • Alex Schwerin • Preetam Sen
Kairon Serrette • Andrew Sherwin • Joseph Smith • Christopher Starck • Jeff Wagner

Thank you to all our past alumni award winners … and to all those yet to come! #McCormackProud

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