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IN THE BIG LEAGUES: PROVIDING INDUSTRY-VALUED RESEARCH

STUDENTS SHOW LEADERSHIP, COLLABORATION, AND DETERMINATION IN REAL-WORLD RESEARCH ROLES

RSBM students spent the year working alongside top executives of professional sport organizations to complete research projects with real-world significance. The payoff for students is extraordinary experiential learning – and repeat clients who highly value their work.

“Every semester, our students collaborate on industry-valued research projects for sports organizations eager for their results,” says Jason Williams, EdD, director of the Rawlings Sport Business Management program. “As the work becomes more complex in this rapidly changing marketplace, students consistently step up to the plate and hit home runs.”

And as each new project wraps up, Williams says, organizations are waiting on deck with new research challenges to engage Maryville students.

During the 2019-2020 school year, students worked primarily with the St. Louis Blues, the St. Louis Cardinals and Rawlings Sporting Goods. Among other projects, students were tasked with research involving esports competitions, customer service assessments, and major sponsorship valuations.

This year, second-phase opportunities have opened up with those same organizations as well as a new project with World Wide Technology Raceway. In addition, Rawlings has challenged students to research the added value of becoming an official sponsor of Major League Baseball. 🏆

NET GOALS: DEVELOPING ESPORTS COMPETITIONS FOR THE ST. LOUIS BLUES



Providing opportunities for students to work directly with sport business professionals is a vital feature of the Maryville University Rawlings Sport Business Management program. The innovative Blues Gaming NHL20 Showdown, held last spring, is no exception. Students were highly involved with Blues executives throughout the esports competitions, from initial viability research to final implementation.

“The Blues Esports Project was a great hands-on learning experience for me and my classmates,” says Blake Anselm, junior. “We were part of every stage of the process, spending eighteen months collecting data, doing research, and creating something unique to the Blues.”

In 2019, when the St. Louis Blues decided to follow the NHL’s lead and explore ways to engage an exploding base of young esports fans, the franchise turned to Maryville students for help. As a Sport Promotions class project, students researched types of events, potential partnerships, event venues, and promotional activities. Successive classes in promotions and Corporate Sponsorship followed through on that research, culminating in Spring 2020 competitions.

During the spring semester, as the Covid-19 pandemic closed classrooms across the country, Maryville University courses were completed online. The new format complemented the work RSBM students were doing with the St. Louis Blues. In twice weekly virtual meetings, students connected with Blues corporate teams to finalize the Blues Gaming NHL20 Showdown. There was a lot to map out, because the event involved two simultaneous esports competitions held over a three-week period – one for high school teams and one for individual play. Meanwhile, students reached out to regional high schools to recruit teams

and individuals, ultimately exceeding participation goals.

“In cooperation with the St. Louis Blues, Maryville students were responsible for complete execution of the athletic competitions,” says Larry Albus, instructor. “Our sport business management classes have always involved content supported by group work on outside projects. This is a clear example of the valuable, intensive learning our approach provides for students.”

With development tasks wrapped up, students moved into roles as tournament managers and team representatives. They also created brackets and posted results to the website.

“It was incredibly exciting and rewarding to see the project come to fruition,” says Anselm. “We learned firsthand about how much time and hard

work goes into creating something from nothing and trying to get people to adopt a new and innovative idea.”

Haley Akihiro, sophomore, served as a tournament manager and worked with high school team representatives. She hopes to leverage her experience in the areas of corporate sponsorship or finance after graduation.

“We worked closely with the Blues staff, and I learned a lot about how their organization works and what their goals are,” Akihiro says. “I learned about all of the things you have to consider when you are a professional sport team and running an event that may not seem typical.” 🏆



RESEARCH CLASSES EXCEL IN CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

STUDENTS ENGAGE IN FOCUS GROUPS, VIRTUAL MEETINGS, ONLINE SURVEYS

Students in the 2019-2020 Rawlings Market Research and Development classes explored new survey methods and faced unique challenges related to the pandemic environment. In the final analysis, they exceeded expectations – by a long shot.

In a typical year, students attend softball and baseball tournaments to survey players and coaches about a featured product, analyze the data collected, then present their findings to a Rawlings executive team.

Last fall, however, along with traditional field work, students successfully engaged in a new research method – focus groups. In the spring, restricted by the COVID-19 interruption mid-semester, students adapted and continued their research via email surveys and virtual meetings.

“Following each research effort, we presented our findings to Rawlings executives in a Zoom meeting,” Schmidt says. “There were up to 20 people on the call, and they asked questions of students as if they were the experts, asking for their ideas and reactions. It was distance learning at its best.”

Product Testing and Focus Groups

For on-site product testing, students took the Rawlings Mantra bat to a showcase tournament held in St. Louis that involves over 100 elite softball teams from around the country. Maryville students reached out to coaches and identified more than 150 players willing to participate in a blind bat test at the nearby Rawlings Tech Center.

Those same players participated in focus groups that addressed a wide range of topics.

“It was the first time we’d done focus groups, and it was challenging,” says Schmidt. “Ultimately, the information students obtained was highly valuable to the Rawlings product development team.”

Players in each group were asked questions designed to help Rawlings better understand their customers, such as: Do you bat right or left? What sport products do you use? What are your favorite, and least favorite, colors? What type of music do you listen to? The data collected from such questions helps Rawlings make important design decisions as well as create appealing ads.

Students analyzed the focus group data and presented their findings to a Rawlings executive panel that included the chief operating officer and marketing and product development directors.

Rainy weather over the tournament weekend meant some teams who had agreed to participate in the surveys and testing left St. Louis early, recalls Taylor Shingler, junior. Luckily, she says, back-up teams had been identified early on, and the researchers adjusted to accommodate as many teams and players as possible.

“In sports, there are always changing scenarios so being flexible is crucial,” she says. “The project as a whole would not have been possible without the class working together through every step.”

Customized Product Research

The spring semester unfolded much differently than in previous years because of Covid-19 restrictions. Students were asked to explore custom sports gear – what products can be customized, and of

those, which are most in demand? – and created an online research process to meet the task.

“Rawlings is largely focused on baseball and is the best custom glove builder on the market, but what other custom gear might they consider promoting? That was our challenge,” Schmidt says. “We considered a lot of options – gloves, apparel, bags, catcher’s equipment, helmets, shoes, phone cases, and more.”

Because local high school baseball teams were sidelined, students adjusted to the new reality by designing an email survey sent to an organization for elite players.

Morgan McKinnies, sophomore, who wants to be head of operations for a sports organization someday, researched helmet customization and helped develop new product ideas.

“This experience helped me see how data can be used to build your brand awareness and compete in the market,” she says. “Throughout this process, we sifted through thousands of responses regarding customization, and we applied that data to our recommended products and features.”

This is one of the first courses students take in the program, says Schmidt, and every class is dedicated to project planning.

“With limited experience in research going into these projects, our students consistently step up to the plate and provide Rawlings with meaningful results,” Schmidt says. “We say this all the time, because it’s true – we have a graduate program at the undergraduate level.”



“WITH LIMITED EXPERIENCE IN RESEARCH GOING INTO THESE PROJECTS, OUR STUDENTS CONSISTENTLY STEP UP TO THE PLATE AND PROVIDE RAWLINGS WITH MEANINGFUL RESULTS.”

TICKET SELLERS FOR THE WIN: ASSESSING CUSTOMER SERVICE

For the St. Louis Cardinals, the first pitch toward customer satisfaction comes from the ticket window at Busch Stadium. For the past seven years, students in the Rawlings Sport Business Management program have assessed the performance of those ticket sellers to ensure transactions are positive fan experiences.

"From our research, we know that if customers have a good experience at the ticket window, they'll have a good experience at the ballpark – whether the Cardinals win or lose by the scoreboard," says Jason Williams, EdD, RSBM program director and research project facilitator.

As part of the research, "secret shoppers" visit Cardinals ticket windows just before a home game to pick up will call tickets. These "customers" are asked to purchase tickets for future games at the same time, and later they respond to survey prompts about the transaction, such as: When you approached the window,

was the seller on a cell phone? Were you offered multiple seating options? Were you thanked for your purchase?

Adam Aldridge, senior, and Jacob Anderson, junior, worked with Williams on the project. Their roles involved building and administering the survey, communicating with Cardinals staff to ensure a smooth process, analyzing response data, developing recommendations, and finally, presenting their results to Cardinals executives.

"Customer satisfaction or experience-based surveys are always unique; every experience at the ballpark was different. That's what made it so challenging," says Anderson. "But when dealing with large amounts of data like we did in this project, it's interesting to find patterns or similarities in the customers' overall experiences."

Students presented their research to Cardinals executives at Busch Stadium.



"Their response was very positive," Aldridge says. "Overall, we found some improvements resulting from last year's research and presented several recommendations for next year."

The data Aldridge and Anderson gathered will be applied to customer-focused training sessions with the ticketing staff during the off season.

While working on this research, Anderson discovered a new passion in the sport business industry.

"A few months after the presentation to the Cardinals, I chose to start focusing on the business intelligence and strategy side of what the industry could offer," he says. "The data visualization aspect of this project really blazed the path for my future career. Standing in front of the Cardinals staff and presenting the research that Adam and I had collected was an unforgettable feeling." 🦋



WELCOME! PARTNERSHIP WITH PEAK SPORTS ANNOUNCED

STUDENTS GAIN VALUABLE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN COLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

The Rawlings Sport Business Management program welcomed an important partner to the team in 2019 – Peak Sports MGMT – opening up new opportunities for students to obtain real-world experience in collegiate athletics.

"We're pleased to have the support of Peak Sports and excited about the many benefits this partnership provides for our students," says Jason Williams, EdD, director of the Rawlings Sport Business Management program.

Peak Sports works with universities to build corporate sponsorship for athletic programs, and manages and markets collegiate games, contests, and tournaments. RSBM students participate as volunteers in various roles with the Frisco Classic and Round Rock Classic baseball tournaments, both annual events.

"Our students now have greater access to real-world experiences in many aspects of the sports industry, including digital media, promotions, and ticketing," says Williams. Through the partnership, he says, students work side-by-side with

professionals, so they're building a career network while learning first-hand about the industry.

Already, Peak Sports has hired four graduates of the Rawlings Sport Business Management program.

"We really value our relationship with Maryville and are grateful to have such experienced and hard-working individuals on our staff," says Ryan Holloway, president of Peak Sports. "Maryville lays the groundwork so when students arrive to our team, they are ready to hit the ground running."

Kaylee Burton, senior, volunteered at the Frisco Classic last year. That experiential learning opportunity, along with others provided through the Rawlings Sport Business Management program helped her develop key skills and insights, she says.

"I'm able to get out into the real world to learn what aspects of sport business I find most interesting," she says. "I learn a lot more by doing, than by just being in the classroom."

Burton and her fellow Maryville students stand out against other collegiate volunteers because of their passion and drive, says Cara Holloway, senior vice president for Peak Sports.

"Students come to the events understanding they are there to work, not just be a fan," she says. "They have a different mentality and know it requires all-hands-on-deck to ensure the tournament runs smoothly."

As an added benefit, Peak Sports has named Rawlings as the "official baseball" for the two collegiate tournaments, which helps to increase brand awareness for the Rawlings Sport Business Management program. 🦋



PANDEMIC CREATES NEW **VIRTUAL** LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES



During a global pandemic that mandates college courses be taught online, how does an educational program widely known for hands-on learning stay viable? Last year, even as arena doors remain closed and sport business professionals worked from home, students in the Rawlings Sport Business Management program continued to gain valuable industry experience.

Those first months of learning during a pandemic required adaptability – and ultimately helped the program prepare for the 2020-2021 school year, since most courses had already adjusted technologically to the new reality.

“We have always been heavily invested in experiential learning opportunities,” says Daniel Schmidt, senior program coordinator. “The pandemic challenged us to find new ways to provide students with insider industry knowledge, but we made the pivot and our students were actively learning and doing throughout their courses.”

Virtual Viewpoints

Every Thursday, for example, the program held online professional development seminars with representatives from all areas of sport business. Students facilitated conversations with guests that included industry leaders as well as alumni who work in various

roles for athletic teams and other key organizations.

Over the past year, students in the Sport Promotions and Corporate Sponsorship classes worked with the St. Louis Blues to develop Blues NHL20 Showdown, an innovative new esports competition held this spring. From initial research to final implementation, Rawlings sport business management students were integral to the project. The crucial final phase – implementation – was completed as students held twice-weekly virtual meetings with Blues corporate teams to finalize details. Despite the limitation placed on planning by the Covid-19 pandemic, the esports competition far exceeded participation goals.

Attention to Detail

The program also changed direction for students in the Event and Facilities Management course. By mid-semester, they would have been hosting live events to showcase their skills in event execution. Instead, small student groups were asked to explore an industry specific event on a deeper, more technical level. They first created a rider – a comprehensive document outlining all aspects of an event, such as parking, security, marketing, vendors, power requirements, and media setup.

“Following the rider, students created a run of show, a timeline for things like tailgates, game timeouts, and half-time activities,” Schmidt says. “The entire project involved research with corporate and facilities partners, such as the St. Louis Blues, the Dome at America’s Center, and the Tampa Bay Lightning.”

This shift in education involved greater interaction with industry professionals, says Schmidt – a development made easier with technology access, training, and support provided by the university.

Students met with industry professionals via the Zoom app to ask questions and learn first-hand about the complexities of planning a sports event. Lamont Buford, senior director of game presentation for the Arizona Coyotes and Kevin Bauer, ’17, special events manager for the St. Louis Blues, were two such mentors.

“Students were able to ask questions about their project to industry professionals who do exactly what the students were working on,” Schmidt says.

The use of new technologies is an added skill in itself, but students learned other key skills, Schmidt says, like time management and holding themselves and each other accountable for work completed outside a normal classroom structure. 🍷

ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS

ALUMNI SHARE INDUSTRY SUCCESS STORIES

THOMAS WOELFEL, '14

**DIRECTOR, BUSINESS OPERATIONS/COLLEGE OF
CHARLESTON ATHLETICS**

Thomas Woelfel, '14, discovered his particular passion in the wide world of sport business management during a summer internship just before his junior year. That experience helped shape his career and continues to inspire his work.

“Not only did I learn a lot, I was able to build relationships with people in the industry I still have today,” Woelfel says. It all began with a meaningful conversation he had with Jason Williams, EdD, Rawlings Sport Business Management program director. “Jason asked me what I wanted to do in the sports industry. I knew I wanted to work in college athletics but wasn’t sure exactly what I wanted to do within that industry,” Woelfel recalls.

In response, Williams reached out to a former colleague at the University of Arkansas and helped Woelfel obtain a summer internship on the campus.

“Part of my internship required me to research all the different aspects of college athletics and interview folks within the athletic department,” Woelfel says. “After those interviews and a number of different projects during the

internship, I realized I had a passion for the business and budgeting side. I was able to get a second summer internship there and worked in depth with the business department, gaining great experience that still helps me to this day.”

Now, as director of business operations for the College of Charleston athletics department, Woelfel helps to create yearly budgets as well as works with coaches throughout the year to maximize their budgets. He also creates U.S. Department of Education and NCAA financial reports and assists with scholarship distribution to student-athletes.

“I really enjoy the opportunity to have a positive impact on student-athletes and look forward to that opportunity every day,” Woelfel says.

Prior to joining the College of Charleston in 2018, he earned an MBA, then served as an accountant in the University of Kentucky athletics department for over two years.

“I graduated from Maryville with a complete understanding of the time



and effort it takes to be successful in the business of sports because I saw it first-hand as a student through my volunteer and internship opportunities,” Woelfel says. “Additionally, nearly every class I took had real world implications. For example, the sales class with Salesforce: Although I have not held a sales position, I have been able to use the results-centered selling techniques I learned then throughout my career.”

While Woelfel appreciates the many opportunities provided by RSBM to gain real-world experience in the industry, building a network as a student was also a major benefit, he says.

“The program sets up a number of opportunities each year to create relationships with folks in the industry,” he says. “These are relationships that help long after graduation.” 🍷



JOSH PARRISH, '18

GENERAL MANAGER, PEAK SPORTS
MGMT/MISSOURI WESTERN STATE

Josh Parrish, '18, landed a challenging job in sponsorship even before he graduated from the Rawlings Sport Business Management program. After hitting his annual sales goal in just six months, he was promoted to general manager for a university athletics program – the first ever to hold the position at the school.

Parrish works at Missouri Western State in St. Joseph, Mo., and is employed by Peak Sports MGMT, which owns multimedia rights for universities around the country. Previously, he was a Peak Sports account executive at Nicholls University in Thibodaux, Louisiana.

“That the organization has such confidence in my work speaks to my experiences,” Parrish says. “I’ve worked in sales and sponsorship and am able to bring a high level of professionalism to the position because of the many real-world volunteer and internship opportunities provided by Maryville when I was a student.”

Parrish joined Missouri Western State athletics in 2019. He is responsible for all sales and fulfillment activation and raises funds in support of athletics programs.

“It’s been a lot of fun to build the property,” he says. “The majority of our funding is external, through booster clubs or corporate sponsorships. We’re an NCAA Division II school, so we don’t have the crazy revenues of other schools. Every single dollar means a lot to our department.”

As part of his responsibilities, Parrish manages partnership contracts and agreements for the athletics office, ensuring an organization’s business goals are met through university programming.

“The best part of working in sports is that every day is different,” Parrish says. “At any given moment, I’m cold-calling businesses to potentially get them involved in marketing, building corporate and community relationships, identifying touch points between the community and the university, and making sure existing partners that support the programs get their brands seen.”

As a student at Maryville, Parrish held six internships in three and a half years.

“You get out of it what you put into it,” he says. “I dug deep and wanted to do

every single internship and volunteer opportunity I could.”

He also worked with the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, the Missouri Valley Conference, Learfield Sports, Rawlings, and Ballpark Village in downtown St. Louis, among other student experiences.

As a former president of the student-run Rawlings Sport Business Management Leadership Council and an alumnus who often speaks with students about his career path and to share industry expertise, Parrish continues to help develop valuable experiences for students.

“We really want to see them have great careers,” Parrish says. “Ultimately, creating memorable experiences so students gain real life experiences is key. It took me a year after graduating to understand how each of my own experiences led me on this path and helped me find my passion in sales. I’m grateful for each of those opportunities.” 🐾

REAGAN PATRICK, '18

TICKET OPERATIONS ASSOCIATE, THE ASPIRE
COMPANY/VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

Reagan Patrick, '18, advises students in the RSBM program to take ample advantage of volunteer and internship opportunities so they’re exposed to the many facets of sport business management. She took her own advice and now enjoys a multi-faceted job in the industry.

“I’ve worked for The Aspire Company at Vanderbilt University in Nashville for two years now,” Patrick says. “I was recently promoted to ticket operations associate from a sales consultant position. I like to call myself a jack of all trades. I’ve done a bit of everything: sell tickets, market different packages, and assist the hospitality department.”

In her first year, Patrick reached her sales goal of \$250,000 in revenue. To achieve that, she relied heavily on skills learned in the Rawlings Sport Business Management program.

“I think the biggest thing I took from the program is being able to adapt to change,” she says. “Our industry is forever changing, so it’s important to be able to stay on your toes and adjust.”

Building your career network is a theme throughout the program, according to Patrick and many other alumni – and they’re not just local connections, Patrick discovered.

“I was able to go on the study abroad trip to England in 2019 with other students and faculty, and that trip exposed me to a lot. It was my first time out of the country,” Patrick says. “I was able to build a lot of connections with people from the different organizations we visited, and I still talk to some of the professionals I met on that trip.”

As a student, Patrick most enjoyed her volunteer work for the annual Missouri Valley Conference basketball tournaments.



“The opportunity was cool because I worked with the person in charge of game day operations,” Patrick says. “I got to see how she wrote the scripts for the announcers. I was in charge of getting the cheer squads and bands where they needed to be as well as getting their music to the DJ – and making sure they knew when to play. I just learned so much from that experience, and that pushes me to still strive for my goal of one day becoming a game day operations director.” 🐾

NICOLE NARDI, '16

COORDINATOR, CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS
ACTIVATION/LAS VEGAS RAIDERS

Nicole Nardi, '16, grew up with sports – especially football. So naturally, she was thrilled to land a position with the Las Vegas Raiders (formerly the Oakland Raiders) after completing her studies.

“I love to talk about football every day, and that’s what I do in my job,” Nardi says. “Working in corporate partnerships for the NFL was my dream.”

As coordinator of corporate partnerships activation for the Las Vegas-based professional football team, Nardi has personally been working with her partners, assisting with some of the founding partners, and working with another colleague to handle all media for their department.

NFL 2020 season has been a busy one, especially since the NFL team recently moved from Oakland to Las Vegas.

“Moving to a new location and opening Allegiant Stadium has been a new experience in all aspects,” Nardi says. “The majority of my focus has been on managing and collecting inventory for all our TV and Radio shows as well as managing our publication inventory. Our formats and inventory amounts have changed drastically, so we’ve had a lot of fun navigating this new realm.”

Nardi is also involved in talks about how the 2020 season will look with Raiders partners and how assets may have changed or may have been affected by COVID-19.

One Rawlings Sport Business Management class in particular, says Nardi, set her career path in motion.

“My corporate sponsorships class helped me figure out exactly what I wanted to do in the field,” she says. “I realized it was a



perfect match for my personality and what I wanted to do professionally.”

Jason Williams EdD, director of the Rawlings Sport Business Management Program, helped Nardi obtain an internship with the St. Louis Cardinals ticket office. It was a fortuitous opportunity, she says: “That decision helped me get a job in the Raiders’ ticketing office. I was promoted to my current position less than a year later.” 🐾

STUDENTS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES

ADAM ALDRIDGE: PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF

“As with any project or internship or volunteer opportunity, you have to put yourself out there, you can’t stand back. Be the first to raise your hand.”

Adam Aldridge, senior, is not one to sit on his hands – in fact, he advises students in the Rawling Sport Business Management program to raise their hands as often as possible when volunteer opportunities arise. Following his own advice, Aldridge has gained valuable real-world experience in many aspects of the industry.

“The number of internships and volunteer opportunities you can sign up for in this program is endless,” he says. Aldridge has worked at events for the Missouri Valley Conference, the NHL All-Star Fanfare, the 100th PGA Championship, Rawlings Sporting Goods, Rapsodo, Peak Sports, the St. Louis Blues, and the St. Louis Cardinals, among others. He plans to volunteer at World Wide Technology Raceway this fall.

“You get to experience a lot of different aspects of sport business,” he says. “It’s huge, being able to get out there and have personal contact with professionals and build those relationships over time.”

The variety of hands-on experiences has also helped him narrow his career goals to a role in operations or

sponsorship. When he first came to Maryville, Aldridge was hesitant about jumping into the sales field. As an upperclassman, he sees things quite differently.

“I’ve learned how to have comfortable and meaningful conversations with people so now I’ve gained confidence working in sales,” he says. “In our Game Face class, sales professional Rob Cornilles taught us his selling approach. It helped me feel like I was saying the right things, not just calling organizations blindly. Having the right words – even just to leave a voicemail – has a big impact on your confidence as well as your success.”

Aldridge says classroom lessons and on-the-job experiences go hand in hand. He enjoyed a project in his sports analytics class where students compared the equivalent value of sports marketing strategies – why one tactic is more successful over another.

“After that class, I did similar work as an intern with the St. Louis Blues,” he says. “It was cool to apply my classroom knowledge to the internship and get those two perspectives.”



The need for flexibility in operational planning, especially in these times of a global pandemic, is another lesson Aldridge finds valuable. He worked on an esports project for the St. Louis Blues. Students were tasked by the team with developing and executing an esports tournament.

“We needed to pivot from where we started last fall to where we ended up when it launched,” Aldridge says. They shifted outreach strategies to attract local players and high school teams when the first effort fell short, and had to change the in-person championship game to a virtual event, along with other tweaks. In the end, the event far exceeded their original goals for participation.

Persistence is the hallmark of success, Aldridge says: “It was a good feeling to know we got the job done and did it well. As with any project or internship or volunteer opportunity, you have to put yourself out there, you can’t stand back. Be the first to raise your hand. You came here for a reason. Just do whatever needs doing.”

MORGAN RIPPER: OLYMPIC-SIZED GOALS

“I’ve always had an interest in Olympics history and how the competition unites the world as people set differences aside to showcase their talents.”

Morgan Ripper, senior, has Olympic-sized goals for her career in sport business and is proactive in reaching them. This past spring, she was able to attend a Team USA symposium in Colorado (before concerns over COVID-19 shut down travel and large gatherings) to learn about working behind-the-scenes at Olympic Games.

“One of my aspirations is to do something with Team USA,” Ripper says. “I’m not an athlete, but I like sports in general. I’ve always had an interest in Olympics history and how the competition unites the world as people set differences aside to showcase their talents.”

While searching for internships online, she read about the 2020 Team USA Symposium and jumped at the opportunity.

“The speakers were professionals who work in different areas – like physical and mental health, operations, events, and marketing. They’re already planning for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games,” Ripper says. The event also featured an internship fair with team representatives, and opportunities to network with professionals. Ripper plans to apply for a Team USA position sometime after graduation from Maryville.

Meanwhile, she has made it a point to stay busy with local internships and volunteer opportunities. This fall, she’ll intern with World Wide Technology Raceway in Illinois to help develop STEM initiatives for students ages 13-18. The program involves robotics and esports, among other activities to get youth engaged with racing.

Last winter, Ripper completed an internship with the St. Louis Sports Commission. Her work focused on assisting with the development of the St. Louis Biz Dash, a 5K run that benefits the St. Louis Sports Foundation and maximizing the number of tickets available to the Musial Awards for local organizations, especially those that exemplify good sportsmanship. She has also interned with Rapsodo, a product development company.

In her first two years at Maryville, Ripper engaged in a long list of volunteer experiences, including stints with the 100th PGA championship (which she did even before arriving on campus as a freshman), Cardinals Winter Warmup, the 2019 March Madness in Kansas City, the Round Rock Classic in Texas, and a trip to Reno, Nevada, as a marketing representative for Rawlings.



Ripper also traveled to England with the RSBM study abroad group during the summer of 2019.

“I tried to take advantage of every opportunity that came my way,” Ripper says.

Although months of COVID-19 quarantine slowed down her activities, she used her time to create a virtual job shadow week for the RSBM program. “We broke students up into small groups based on their areas of interest, and we spoke with professionals across the country who work in college or professional sports or in the sporting goods industry,” she says.

As she enters her senior year, Ripper’s big takeaway is this: Don’t sell yourself short.

“Be yourself in interviews and show you’re willing to put forth effort,” she advises. “You might not meet every requirement listed for an opportunity, but being willing to learn and grow goes a long way toward landing these valuable experiences.”

ORGANIZATIONS WE WORK WITH



INSTRUCTORS SHARE THEIR STORIES

ART CHOU: INSPIRING YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

“My father, who was a professor, always said if you want to learn something really well, teach it.”

Art Chou, instructor, brings 30 years of sport business experience to the classroom, along with a deep passion for nurturing the entrepreneurial spirit of students as well as organizations and business professionals with whom he continues to work in the industry.

Chou began his career as a designer of sports equipment, managed golf businesses, and then ran the product side of the business for Rawlings. He was instrumental in developing the longstanding partnership between Maryville University’s Rawlings Sport Business Management program and the sporting goods company, which is located adjacent to campus. During that time, he became interested in teaching.

“My father, who was a professor, always said if you want to learn something really well, teach it,” he says. “I saw an opportunity for myself, Rawlings, and Maryville University to learn from each other.”

Professionally, Chou has primarily focused on sport business entrepre-

neurship in the past six years. Along with being an RSBM instructor, he serves as general manager for Rapsodo, which provides innovative products and data analytics for all 30 major league baseball teams as well as softball and golf organizations.

Previously, Chou co-founded Stadia Ventures, a unique sports tech hub for entrepreneurs, industry partners, and investors. Chou continues to coach individuals and organizations for Stadia Ventures and regularly invites students to participate in various aspects of the company’s client engagement. As a result of that partnership, he has hired several graduates of the RSBM program and provided internships for students.

“I teach a series of four courses in sport entrepreneurship, and the curriculum is based on my work through Stadia Ventures,” Chou says. “Students learn how to develop an idea into a company, beginning with market research and including product pricing, partnerships, and investor relations. The idea is to get



students thinking like an entrepreneur as fast as possible. Their lessons – which are 100 percent based on real-world cases – culminate in an independent study where students design their own startup, then pitch their idea to actual investors.”

Student projects have ranged from innovative hydration bottles to a community center for competitive esports teams, Chou says.

“I strive to plant a seed in my students – to start that, ‘Hey, what if ...’ feeling that inspires them to entrepreneurship,” he says. “I want to them come away with a confidence that says ‘I can do this.’”

LARRY ALBUS: FOCUSED ON INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

“You can read a textbook about sponsorship or promotion or analytics, but to actually to do something and participate in an important project is a strong selling point in post-graduate interviews.”



Larry Albus recently joined the RSBM faculty as an instructor, having previously been a member of the adjunct faculty since 2013. He brings a wide range of expertise in collegiate and professional sports, sponsorship, event ownership, and corporate consulting.

“I enjoy working with Rawlings Sport Business Management students,” Albus says. “I started my career in college athletics at Saint Louis University, helping to run sports programs. I was involved with young people then, and it was great to see them work hard and win games. Now, I tell my students: ‘When this project – whatever it is we’re working on – is finished, your name will be on a final document you can show to potential employers.’ Seeing their success is truly gratifying.”

Following his work as athletic director at SLU, Albus served as commissioner of the Metro Conference. He was a member of the NCAA Men’s Division One basketball tournament committee and represented the NCAA to the U.S. Olympic Committee House of Delegates.

He managed six NCAA national tournament championships, including two Final Four basketball championships.

As president of DWA USA, a national sports marketing agency, he planned and executed sales programs for Holiday Bowl, National Hockey League, PGA, and the United States Baseball Federation. He also managed five PGA golf events and college basketball doubleheaders owned by the agency.

Albus was also vice president and general manager of a Champ Car racing team for three years.

At Anheuser-Busch, Albus created and served as director of the Sports Marketing Group and the International Sports Marketing Division, which included Budweiser’s first World Cup sponsorship.

Most recently, Albus worked with IEG, a Chicago-based consulting agency, where he worked for 18 years. He directed projects for major corporate sponsors and properties, including ExxonMobil, Capital One Bank, TD Ameritrade, and the NCAA, among many others. His work involved advising clients on a wide range

of sponsorship matters: What should I sponsor? How will results be measured? What is the cost, and is it appropriate?

His students now explore those same questions and more for organizations like Rawlings and the St. Louis Blues.

Albus teaches Sports Corporate Sponsorship, Business Analytics, Finance, and Promotions. He guides his students through projects involving valuable, hands-on learning opportunities that go above and beyond a typical classroom experience.

“To me, that is the real point of differential in this program compared to others around the country – the real-world experience and the impact of the students’ work,” Albus says. “You can read a textbook about sponsorship or promotion or analytics, but to actually to do something and participate in an important project is a strong selling point in post-graduate interviews. It’s a terrific asset for students, in terms of job candidacy – they can show the projects they worked on and discuss in detail the work they did.”

BY THE NUMBERS

93%

of graduates have careers in the industry within six months of graduation



of our courses are corporate-partnered

30+

projects and experiential learning opportunities during the 2019-2020 academic year

ALUMNI QUOTES

One thing I have learned about the RSBM program is that they continue to help long after we leave campus. I still reach out to Jason and Daniel for advice, and it's great to know we always have an open line of communication.

Thomas Woelfel, '14
Director of Business Operations
College of Charleston Athletics

I think the thing that all of RSBM graduates can agree on is, every year the program gets better. They are always adding new volunteer events and opportunities. To the current student I would say, please take advantage of everything that you have in front of you – you will get exposed to everything this industry has to offer.

Reagan Patrick, '18
Sales Consultant
The Aspire Company/Vanderbilt University

FACULTY QUOTES

What Maryville does in regard to field experience for sport business management students is unmatched. I can't see another program across the country providing this level of hands-on experience – whether students work with Rawlings, the St. Louis Blues, major university athletic departments, national tournaments, and so much more. That broad range is important because it helps students understand what they like. And, when they apply for their first career job, they have real experience to talk about in an interview.

Art Chou, Instructor

Students involved in the NHL 20 esports competition research and implementation project with the St. Louis Blues took a tremendous amount of satisfaction from their efforts because it wasn't easy. They worked on it from the ground up and, at the end of the day, it turned out to be enormously successful.

Larry Albus, Instructor

STUDENT QUOTES

Our faculty go above and beyond. They come to all the activities students are involved in – whether it’s volunteer opportunities with a sports event or RSBM Leadership Council events. Even if it starts at 6 am., they’re there to make sure things go smoothly and we have everything we need.

Morgan Ripper, Senior

Experiential learning is key in developing skills needed in our industry. The Rawlings Sport Business Management program has blessed me with countless opportunities to enhance these skills and prepares me for a long and successful career in the sport business industry.

Jacob Anderson, Senior

The research project as a whole would not have been possible without the class working together through every step. We worked extremely hard to analyze the data, and it was very exciting to present our findings to Rawlings. I gained valuable experience through the presentation, and I loved having the opportunity to do so.

Taylor Shingler, Junior

2019-2020 INTERNSHIPS

RAWLINGS

Katie Grunert
Mason Schoch
Tyler Quest
Hayden House
Adam Aldridge
Kaylee Burton
Jacob Anderson

ST. LOUIS SPORTS COMMISSION

Morgan Ripper

PEAK SPORTS - CENTRAL ARKANSAS

Emma Drysdale

MISSOURI VALLEY CONFERENCE

Katie Grunert

ST. LOUIS BLUES

Haley Akihiro
Jonathan Schupp
Adam Aldridge
Caroline Hughes
Brandon Turner
Spencer Lundgren

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS

Clayton Meyer
Justin Frisch

ST. LOUIS FC

Nicholas Powers

OLYMPIA ATHLETICS AND EVENTS

Mason Schoch

CHICAGO BANDITS

Maggie Koszala

ST. LOUIS AMBUSH

Rachel Kassing
Ashley West

ABSTRAKT MARKETING GROUP

Eddie Wright
Abigail Monis

SPORTS MONSTER

Matt Wolf

QUINCY GEMS

Cade Schares

ST. LOUIS INTERCOLLEGIATE

ATHLETIC CONFERENCE

Adam Rouse



ALUMNI HONOR

The annual Speed Networking event was first created six years ago by Samantha Robison, '14, who was a senior at the time. The event is still going strong with more than 60 students and 30 industry professionals participating in 2020. This year, the RSBM program—grateful for her major contribution to student success—surprised Robison by renaming the event “The Rawlings Sport Business Management Samantha Robison Career Fair and Speed Networking Event.” “I can’t express enough the amount of joy and honor this brought me. This program, this university, has provided me so much, and I truly wouldn’t be where I am today without any of it,” Robison says.

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Rawlings Sport Business Management Program
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**SPORT BUSINESS
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Rawlings Sport Business Management Program at Maryville University

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