

Episode 23: Discussing Saint Leo's Bachelor's in Sport Business Degree Program

Speaker 1:

Saint Leo 360, a 360 degree overview of the Saint Leo University community.

Greg Lindberg:

Welcome to another episode of the Saint Leo 360 Podcast. Once again, my name is Greg Lindberg, my host here with you. On this episode of the Saint Leo 360 Podcast we are talking about the bachelor of arts in sports business program here at Saint Leo University. And to help us do that we have a great guest with us by the name of Dr. Leon Mohan, who is an associate professor of sports business in the Tapia College of Business at Saint Leo University. Dr. Mohan, welcome to the podcast.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Thanks for having me.

Greg Lindberg:

So first off, Dr. Mohan, just introduce yourself as far as your background and what you did before Saint Leo, and then when you came to Saint Leo and how long you've been with us.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

So I went to school at North Carolina State University and received my undergrad actually in political science, which is interesting because I'm not doing anything with that degree other than monitoring what's going on in politics today. But I ended up doing an internship with a law firm my senior year and realized, "Okay I don't want to be an attorney." Ended up going into the masters of sports management program there. And then that was around the time the Carolina Hurricanes had just moved to Raleigh, North Carolina, so I was one of their very first interns in media relations. After doing that, I worked in professional baseball as a scout for a couple years. I worked for the Montreal Expos, who ended up getting sold and ended up moving on-

Greg Lindberg:

Oh wow.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Yeah. Ended up moving on to working in community recreation and traveling tourism before I realized I wanted to go back and get a doctorate. So I ended up going back to NC State and earning my doctorate and ended up teaching there as well as North Carolina Central University and Texas A&M-Corpus Christi for a couple years prior to coming to Saint Leo. So this is the beginning of my sixth year at Saint Leo here.

Greg Lindberg:

Very nice. Definitely an interesting background.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Yeah. And I've also worked in juvenile justice while I was doing my doctorate.

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Greg Lindberg:

Oh wow. You've had a taste of everything. Wow. Very interesting. So then as far as this program, this sport business program, talk to me about when we started offering it and the reasons behind offering this type of program.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

So from what I gather, the program started out as part of the PE program. So it was in the PE department, and right around 2003 I think there was more of a growth emphasis on sports management, so that's when it moved into the college of business. And at that time, they brought in a professor named Dr. Susan Foster, and she helped create not only the undergrad but the masters of sport management program. Now right around 2008, I think it was, they changed the name to sport business, which for us in the industry is very important because we want to make sure that prospective employers understand that our students are coming with a business background. And so that's where we're at now as far as we offer an undergrad in sport business, but then we also have an MBA program that has concentration in sport business.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

When I talk about the focus on the business and being part of the college of business and why that's so important, we have what we call an industry council. And on that industry council, we have professionals that work for each of the major sports teams in the area. So the Bucs, the Lightning and the Rays. We've got people that... We have the gentleman that used to run one of the most historic arenas in the world, Madison Square Garden. And then people that are pretty high up in sports as far as in the Tampa Bay area. And so the advantage that we have is we lean on them for advice with regards to developing our curriculum. And so we're able to be flexible and constantly change and offer different experiences, but also put them in touch and network with those individuals that are actually in the positions that the students want to get to.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

And so one of the things that I've noticed over the years teaching, and I've been in a number of conferences, is that a lot of sport management programs are housed in, say, a health and human resources, or a PE department, or education department. And what employers want to hear is that the students come in and are graduating with a business acumen, a business background. And so that's one of the things I stress to my students is, "Make sure that you put that you're coming from the college of business. That's where your degree is from."

Greg Lindberg:

Gotcha. Very interesting. That's just so amazing about those direct connections that we have to such big name sports organizations and the individuals with those just incredibly powerful backgrounds and whatnot, and really a strength of this program.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Yeah. And I will tell you those individuals have been an immense help as far as the direction of the program. I know a couple of us professors have implemented some of the things that they've talked about into our classes, and in some cases we've actually reached out to them to do projects, so the

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students have actual, realistic projects that they're working on rather than just sitting in the classroom and discussing concepts and topics.

Greg Lindberg:

Yeah. That's wonderful and we can definitely get into that in a little bit as far as specific examples and internship opportunities and whatnot as well. As far as the admission requirements, what is required of a prospective student to be admitted to this bachelors program?

Dr. Leon Mohan:

There are no special requirements with regards to our program. It's basically the same as the university's admission's requirements. And so as long as they meet those requirements then they're eligible to be in our program.

Greg Lindberg:

I see. Easy enough. And then in terms of prospective students and students that you've taught that have gone into the program, talk to me about some examples of those students and is it primarily the traditional age student? Or some adult learners? And what kinds of backgrounds and interests?

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Well like I said we have our undergrad and then we have our graduate program. So with the undergrad, they're traditional students, traditional age, just graduating out of high school. We do get a lot of student athletes that come into our program because they already have that interest in sports. But we do get a lot of students that might take a class like our intro sport class from another major, or they might even be undecided, and realize, "Hey this is kind of interesting." Because what we have is we have a course called Introduction to Sport Management, and it doesn't dig too deep into any specific area, but it gives students a general overview of different career opportunities and basically a broader perspective of the sport industry so that students have an idea of what this field is about.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

So those students, they come from anywhere. We do get a lot of students from... I have a class right now, my intro to sport management class, and I basically ask them where they came from and they are spread out throughout the country, which is pretty interesting to me because normally I get students that are either from Florida or they're from the Northeast. So they come from anywhere, and the thing that we all try to get them to understand is that you're going into a profession where you have to have a passion for it. And that's a key phrase that we always use. "You need to have a passion for this industry." Because a lot of times you might not be making the same amount as somebody who is doing the equivalent job in a different sector is making. And you're probably going to work a little more hours, because when you think about it, when events happen and games happen, it's nights and weekends.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

So you might working during the day during the week, but then you might have to work nights and weekends. You might be putting in 50, 60 hours. And you're getting either the same or even less pay than somebody doing something similar in another sector. So we try to really impress upon students, you really have to enjoy this. But you also have to, when you go into this industry, you can't be going into it as a fan. And what I mean by that is if you're working in baseball and you're a fan of baseball, employers in the industry don't want to see you get caught up in the game. They want to make sure

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you're doing your job. And so it's a fine line of you got to do your job but I'm also kind of a fan and I have to have a passion for what I'm doing.

Greg Lindberg:

Right. Yeah. That's a great point. I think a lot of people probably going into with that fan perspective, and may not necessarily have that passion for the business side so that is a great point on that.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Yeah because when you get in there, a lot of time you're not even going to be watching the game at all.

Greg Lindberg:

Right.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

You're going to be looking at everything else but the game.

Greg Lindberg:

Exactly. Yup. There's so much that goes on behind the scenes obviously. Yeah. And then as far as the bachelors program, that is strictly offered on ground at university campus correct?

Dr. Leon Mohan:

It is. When I first started, we didn't have any classes that were offered online. And last year I developed our first one that would be online. So our sports finance class is now being offered for the first time online this specific term. And now we're in the process of creating some more opportunities for online classes. The thing with those, though, it's not designed to take the place of on-ground, but offer more flexibility. And so the reason why the flexibility is so important is we get a lot of, like I said, student athletes and especially those that play in a spring sport. With the hours that they put in for their sport and everything else, giving them a little bit of flexibility to maybe take a sport finance online, it would be much more beneficial to them is the way we see it. But once again, the plan is to, especially now with COVID it's changing the way we look at things, starting to develop more of these online options, but not to take the place of actual on-ground options.

Greg Lindberg:

Right. I see. Interesting. And then in terms of the credit requirements and everything, I would imagine it's a fairly standard bachelors program approach and requirement in that regard.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Yeah. It's standard. The one thing with our program is we don't have much flexibility with regards to electives students can take. So I think our program, they have one free elective that they're able to take. But our program is accredited under COSMA, which is the Commission of Sports Management Accreditation. And they have some guidelines and requirements as far as courses that need to be met, and so our curriculum is pretty much jam-packed with sports business classes that are required. So it doesn't give the students much opportunity to take other free electives from other disciplines if they wanted to. And one of the things that I noticed with this program that's different than other programs that I've been involved with is the focus on experiential learning.

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Dr. Leon Mohan:

And so with our curriculum, they start out with the Intro to Sports Management class, and then right around their sophomore year they take a class called Apprenticeship. And so this apprenticeship is basically they go and they work for a sports organization and they work about five hours a week for the entire semester. And that's really to get their foot in the door, let them understand what it's like to work in a professional atmosphere, because a lot of these students may not have had a part-time job in high school, or they may not have worked. They don't understand anything about working in even a sports organization. They played the sport. They've never seen the behind the scenes stuff. So that five hours is designed to get their feet wet.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Once they're done with that, they can, later on, take a class called practicum, which is basically the same class but now they work 10 hours a week, so they get a little bit more experience. That's an elective that they can take. They don't have to. Once they're done with all of the course work, the very last that they're required to complete is an internship. That internship is 12 weeks long for 40 hours a week. So they have to complete 480 hours. It's basically a full-time job, and one of the things that we do, which I think is very valuable, is we go out and we visit our interns while they're at the facility, and I've gotten a lot of feedback from the supervisors in how... And I'm not just saying this because I'm biased, but how great our students are. And it's partially because they are doing 40 hours where some internships only require 20.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

So our students tend to take it a little bit more serious. They know it's a job. And then the other thing that I've heard a lot is that they haven't seen supervisors or faculty come out to the sites. So when I go out, they're kind of impressed that we take time to do that. Now, the other thing I think that happens because of that is the student knows that, "Hey Dr. Mohan or Dr. Williamson or Mr. Hatlem, they're coming to check up on me so I better do a good job because my grade is dependent on this." And so that's the final thing that they do. Once they're complete with that, they do this portfolio that basically goes into almost every aspect of the organization, such as the history, how do they do marketing? It basically ties in everything they've learned in the curriculum and now they've put it into reality, into a paper based on where they just worked. And then they do a presentation on it.

Greg Lindberg:

Wow. That's great that they get such a broad scope and just like you said, the experiential learning. And especially that apprenticeship early on sophomore year that you mentioned. I find that very interesting and that's, like you said, just getting your feet wet early and knowing, "Is this right for me?" And just really honing your skills early on.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Yeah. It's really important, and I was even talking to my class today about, and I asked them, "Do you know what you want to do when you graduate?" And a couple of them thought they did. Most of them didn't. I said, "That's okay. That's what you're here for. You're here to figure it out and that's what this curriculum is designed to help you figure out, what are of sports might interest you going forward." Because you got to think. I think there's so much pressure that's put on a student as they go into college.

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You have to know what you want to do. But how does a 17, 18, 19 year old know what's out there? And so that's where that experiential learning ties in.

Greg Lindberg:

Exactly. Yup. And then I also understand that there are some areas of focus in terms of minors and tracks. If you could speak to some of those specific areas and what students can really focus on in this program.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

So we do have a sport marketing minor, where students could take a number of additional marketing classes as well as a marketing class that I teach. And I get a lot of students that are interested in marketing and decide, "Hey that's what we want to do." Those students tend to be from maybe another major. What I get a lot of marketing students whose major is marketing, decide that they want to take a sport marketing minor in some of our classes that we have such as the sport marketing class. Another one that we have is the sport event facility management.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

And so that is a minor that's going to really focus in on operating facilities, administering events, a lot of event planning. And so those classes are designed to help students in that area. And then we, as a department, are tied with hospitality. And so hospitality and sport management are very intertwined in the stuff that they do. And so you get a number of students that might have that interest, whether it be the food and concessions that you have a sporting facility, or the guest services aspect of running an arena. Those types of things. So we do offer those three minors that students might take advantage of with regards to the undergrad program.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Now we haven't really talked about the MBA program, but sport business is a concentration that we get a lot of students look at. So with the sport business concentration in the MBA, we have a legal issues course, sports marketing, sport finance. It pretty much mimics our undergrad curriculum with a number of the courses, but it's just taking it at the graduate level and the concepts and topics are at a higher level of thinking and processing.

Greg Lindberg:

I see. Yeah. And I would imagine we do have a fair number of students who do complete the bachelors program and immediately transition into that MBA in sports business as well.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Yup. And I will say the students in the MBA, they tend to be on one of two sides of the spectrum. I get a number of students that are graduate assistants, so they're graduate assistants in our athletic program. And so they pursue that. And then I get a lot of students that are either in the middle of their careers, they're looking for a career change, get a lot of students that are in the military that are looking at going into sport business once they're done with their duty. And so the spectrum is broad when it comes to who is in that MBA program.

Greg Lindberg:

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Gotcha. In terms of the faculty, I guess we can even think about both the undergrad and grad programs on this one, but talk to me about the backgrounds of our faculty and their availability. And from what I understand we have quite a wide variety of faculty from so many different backgrounds with such a tremendous wealth of different experiences.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Now with the MBA program, we have a wide array of faculty that teaches those courses. Once they get into the concentration courses in the MBA program, which is sport business, the two professors that teach those courses are myself and Dr. Williamson. And Dr. Williamson teaches, I believe it's the event management course and the legal issues course and the foundations course in the program. And I teach the sports finance and sports marketing course. So, we are the two that teach in that MBA program.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Now when they get to the undergrad, we have Mr. Hatlem, who is a third professor in the program and it's the three of us that teach all the courses in the sport business undergrad. We did have Dr. Foster, who I mentioned earlier. She retired, I believe it was last year. I think it was last year she retired. And so now the curriculum is taught by the three of us. Mr. Hatlem has been here for I think over 10 years. He teaches the sports sociology course. We have a senior seminar which is basically preparation for the internship class. And he also teaches a governance class, sports governance. Dr. Williamson, her areas of expertise are going to focus on the event management, facility management, she teaches an intro to sport management course, and sport sales.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

That's another big one. And that's a really important course that I do try to tell students... It's not required but we try to tell students the importance of that because one of the things we gather from the experts in the industry is that they want people who know how to do sales regardless of what position they're in. At the end of the day it's about selling tickets or getting people to buy your product. So those are her areas. And then my two main focuses are going to be sports marketing and sports finance.

Greg Lindberg:

I see. Very cool.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

And I believe Dr. Williamson's been here for about eight years. So Mr. Hatlem's been here the longest, then Dr. Williamson at eight years and me going on six.

Greg Lindberg:

Gotcha. And I would imagine the faculty, the ones you mentioned and yourself obviously as well, are very available and we definitely pride ourselves on the small class sizes and the availability to the student whenever they have a question or need any kind of help.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

That is one thing that I've thoroughly enjoyed being here at Saint Leos. When I taught at, say, NC State, I had a class of, I think, 80, 85 students in there. And I couldn't tell you anybody's name with the exception of the first two rows I would say. Where here, I have a class of, say, 14, 15, no more than 25

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students, and I'm able to get to know their names within the first couple weeks, get to know their favorite teams, what is their interest as far as area of sport that they want to go into. And why that's so important is, in getting to know their team helps to develop their relationship. So I could joke with a student who's a Cleveland Browns fan about why their team is so bad, but it helps that relationship that you have where they just feel more comfortable with you.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

And that's one of the great things about sports. It allows you to do that. Now, getting to understand what area of interest and opportunities that they're out there, once I get a student that tells me, "I want to go into working in sport marketing." Now my mind is thinking, "Okay what connections do I have? Who can I put this person in touch with and get them some of that experience?" Whether it's as simple as doing a shadow experience where they follow them for a day. But I let the students know that all three of us have a very broad network. We know a lot of people in the industry. Now it's their job to let us know who you are as students, what you're interested in, and you to take the initiative to come to us and tell us, "Hey. I'm looking to do sport marketing. What advice can you give me? What help can you give me?"

Dr. Leon Mohan:

And once they do that, any one of the three of us are more than happy and willing to help them out and lead them. But we want to see students take that initiative, because once they graduate we're not going to be able to hold their hands and guide them through everything.

Greg Lindberg:

Yeah. That's great. Very well said, and just like you said, as far as the career guidance and being able to work one-on-one and really getting to know that student so well is just so valuable in so many ways.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

And what I'll add to that is, with the three of us, we've all worked in sports at one level or another, whether it's in college athletics, whether it's in recreation, professional athletics, all three of us have developed a huge network. Not only that, but we've taught students who have gone into these areas. So a lot of times students will reach out to us and say, "Hey do you have an intern or somebody that's looking to get involved in this area of sport that's looking for an internship?" And so at such a small university with such a small class, it allows us to have those relationships that honestly at the bigger universities, you lose that. You just don't get that.

Greg Lindberg:

Exactly. Yeah. Let's dive into, as far as, I know we briefly touched on it earlier, but as far as those connections to the local sports organizations, teams, and some of those connections. What opportunities do students get through this program as far as that experiential learning?

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Well one of those, I give you an example of something I did, and this is before we became the exclusive education partner of the Bucs. I think it was actually the year before that happened. The Bucs hired, I believe, a new VP of Marketing, and she and I got into contact through somebody that's on our advisory council. So someone on our advisory council reached out to them and said, "Hey I have a professor that teaches marketing that would like to do some work with us." And so we got in contact and next thing

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you know, I had my students meeting at Raymond James Stadium in one of their big conference rooms. Students, they were just impressed to be there and sit and watch, looking out the window and how nice being in that setting was.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

But the purpose was for them to get in touch with somebody that's actually in a position they might want to be in. Now the other part is, the Bucs wanted... One of the things that they struggle with is getting Millennials and college-aged students into their seats and become fans. They realized that most people that come to the games in this area are probably fans of another team because we're such a transient town. But they wanted to at least make it so that the Tampa Bay Bucs would be their favorite home team. So it's your secondary team. And how do we go about doing that? And so the students just sat there and came up with a bunch of ideas that really impressed their marketing team, and over the entire semester they started working very closely with the Bucs.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

And so it got to the point where I divided the class into groups and each one of them had something specific they were working on, and they had somebody they were supposed to communicate with specifically in the Bucs marketing department. And I just, at that point, stepped aside and let them take a lead while still monitoring what's going.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

And so what ended up happening is they put on this huge event where the cheerleaders, the mascot, they all came out to the university, they were right in the middle of the courtyard there giving away stuff, handing out all kinds of merchandise, and getting people to sign up to be part of, I guess, some kind of email list that they had going on. But also, educate our students on the fact there are student ticket discounts that a lot of our students didn't know about. They also came up with an idea of doing some kind of a tailgating competition between the universities at a Bucs game. And so the Bucs, afterwards, they were very pleased with what ended up happening, and what the students did, their ideas with regards to this. So they implemented some of the ideas that came out of this class. And for the students, it was great because they got to see their work actually become reality, and those are the kind of experiences that we want.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Now beyond that, with the marketing class, their required to do a marketing plan, but they're required to go out into the community, identify a business, work with the marketing person for that business and develop a marketing plan. So for the businesses, it's great because they're getting a lot of information from the students whether they use it or not, but it's at the very least free information they may not have gathered on their own. And so those are the kind of things that they do. Unfortunately this year, I'm not requiring them to go out and work with a business. They got to do it outside of working with somebody specifically because of COVID. And so that's a marketing class. Business or finance class, they're required to do a business plan where they meet with a small business owner in sports in the area, and just go through what that process is right to do a business plan.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

In addition to that, one of the assignments that they're working on right now that's pretty cool is they're investing in the stock market. And so with businesses, when you have profit one of the things you might

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want to do is invest in other areas, and one might be in stocks. So they're learning that whole process, which the way I teach that class is I teach it from the standpoint of, "These are some skills you need to know whether you're in sport or now." So we talk about 401Ks and stocks and budgeting and everything else. Dr. Williamson, I know she does, in her event management class, they go out to a facility and I think they do an assessment of the facility, but they also plan events and they administer those events.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

So students get quite a bit of experience not just those classes that we talked about as far as internship and apprenticeship, but actually their process in the classroom requires to get in touch with people in the sport industry. In addition to all of that, they're required to do a number of volunteer assignments. So I know it's kind of contradictory, volunteer but it's required also, but we are... When the Bucs usually have their games, Century Services does the parking for them. And our students... I think it's the security actually. And so our students will usually go over there and they work for Century Security, and they work the premises for them. So they're getting an idea of what that's about. And that's just one of the many opportunities always popping up. We get emails asking for volunteers to do all kinds of events, whether it's a 5K, something at Amalie, there's a number of different things that come across our desk that we send out to students to get out there.

Greg Lindberg:

Right. Very nice. That's just so neat, just like you said, sitting in that conference of an NFL football team at their headquarters and working with the individuals in leadership roles. You really can't beat that practical experience.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Exactly. Yup.

Greg Lindberg:

In terms of the goals and the outcomes of this program, how would you sum up? What do you hope students walk away with in general?

Dr. Leon Mohan:

For me personally what my hope is that they have a better understanding of the sport industry, and all of the opportunities that are out there with regards to sport. A lot of times, if we do have students when they come in they might be so focused in, "I want to work in professional baseball. I want to work in the NFL." But they're not aware of all of the other options that are out there. If you think about it, if you want to be the sport marketing director for an NFL team, there's only 30 jobs. So my hope is that they have an understanding of what this industry is about, and they've developed the skillset as well as the experience after going through the four years here, or some five years, throughout this program. That they're prepared to represent the university.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

And so that's what I always tell them is that when you get out there, you're not representing only yourself. You're representing the university, but you're also affecting future students who might want to enter into this same area, and might even be looking for a job at the position that you're going to be in. So the overall objective is that they're well-prepared to succeed in sports. And even if it's not sports.

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Some students, like myself when I was an undergrad, whatever it is that they chose, they're taking whatever skills that are transferrable from the sport program into whatever area that they can.

Greg Lindberg:

Right. Very well said. In terms of how common sport business programs are out there within higher education, just talk to me a little bit about that. And then how would you say, in general, does this program separate itself? I know we talked about the practitioner based experiences and obviously the small classes, and anything else you want to add to that.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Well with regards to sport management, sport business, which are utilized one in the same, it's a very big area. I think last time it was over 140 programs just within the US. And so when you look internationally, there are programs all over the world that have sport management majors in it. The other thing about it, too, though is, it's like I tell my students is you're not just competing against other sport management majors. You have people in other disciplines that are competing for these jobs in sport. So sport industry as a whole is very, very competitive, and the number of programs out there has continually increased over the years to where it's, in some cases, one of the more popular programs at those universities.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

So that's something that students need to be aware of. But it's exciting because it's no longer thought of as, "Okay it's PE." People I think are starting to realize, "This is a business." The only difference is there's more of an emphasis on sport, and there are some other minor differences as far as how they generate revenue and marketing. But at the end of the day, you're running a business, and as you can see with professional, college, even youth sports, generates billions and billions of dollars. And so the landscape with regards to programs out there, like I said, it's continuing to grow and enrollment in those areas are probably going to continue to grow.

Greg Lindberg:

Gotcha.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Then what differs, you were asking about, I would say when I look at the programs that I've been at and I look at the programs I'm familiar with out there, the small class sizes, that interaction with your professors, the advisory council that plays such a big role in what we do. Also our location. Even though we're not directly in Tampa, we're close enough to where we have the opportunity to work with all these professional teams, and not only just those three but there's a lot of other sports opportunities in the area. So Florida Sports Coast, we've got a new wire grass campus that's going to be housing a ton of youth athletics, we've got a new tennis bubble.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

So the opportunities for students once they come here are limitless. There's tons of stuff that they could do. Whereas some of these other programs might be in an area where there aren't that many opportunities. And so that's another advantage that I would definitely say that we have over others. And now that we're starting to put more classes online, that flexibility is something that is going to be newer

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to us, but I think that's something that, if you're looking at a program that doesn't have that, that flexibility is something students want these days.

Greg Lindberg:

Yeah. Very true. And just thinking out loud, I know you mentioned as far as location and you think of a lot of universities, colleges, they're in the smaller college towns far away from the professional sports teams. So that is a huge perk enrolling in this program.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Yeah. And I'll give you that perfect example. When I was down at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, I think the closest sports team was the San Antonio Spurs, which was about two and a half hours away. When I was at NC State, the only professional team is the Hurricanes because the Carolina Panthers are two and a half hours away. So even the big universities, like you said they're in small college towns whereas we're right here and there's so many opportunities for these students.

Greg Lindberg:

Exactly. And whether it is the Tampa Bay market, Orlando, South Florida, Jacksonville. It's all fairly close, relatively. So there's so many opportunities there.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

And even if you think broader than just professional sports teams, you've got the college sports. We've had a number of students go to USF and work in their athletic department. But also you think about this, they've got a whole sports complex over there. We've got an IMG Academy not too far down in Bradenton. So I mean I could keep going on and on about the opportunities here, but as a student, that's exciting and something we try to impress upon them to take advantage of.

Greg Lindberg:

Exactly. Yup. And then as far as specific roles that one could attain upon completing this degree program, the bachelors degree, can you give some examples of titles of roles and perhaps even examples of our alumni that have gone on to certain roles.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Well there's tons. In the professional sports, whether it's with the Bucs or the Lightning or the Rays. So we have one... I think there are three alumni that work for the Buccaneers. I think one is the client services representative, or guest services representative. We've got one that it's in ticket sales for the Rays. I'm trying to think who else. We've got a student that works for the Orlando City Football Club. Not sure what his title is. We have one that was hired on to work for Iron Man, and he does, I believe, the marketing for them. Trying to think who else. We had one that was hired by MGM, another by Learfield Sports. So we have them all over the place.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

As far as titles and jobs that you would get by graduating with this degree, you could be the marketing manager. Now a position that's being created is social media positions. So you might be a social media

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manager for the marketing department of a team. Rather than go through the specific job titles because there's so many, I go over the areas. So professional sports, college sports is a big one. And I was actually talking to my students today about this in that there are over 1100 Division One, Two and Three programs out there, and all of them need people that work in equipment, an equipment manager, ticket manager, sports information director, marketing manager. Those are all things that you could do by getting this degree. So the opportunities from college is out there.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

In addition to that, youth sports is a forgotten area that students don't really think about a lot. And if you think about it, pretty much every city has a parks and recreation program and has an athletic program. Those are opportunities that students could get involved in. So maybe being the athletic director for your local parks and recreation organization and coordinating leagues and those types of things. And so you just imagine how many of those there are. You could also work in... And this is where the tie in between travel and sports come in, destination management organizations. They usually have a sports commission or they might have a section within their DMO that focuses in on bringing sports to the community. So their real job is marketing.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

I actually just had a student that I was talking to today about doing an internship possibly with Florida Sports Coast, whose focused then on Pasco County and bringing in youth athletics to the area. So the jobs, there are tons of them out there. The key, though, for students, one big thing is they have to be willing to move around. And so if you want to live in Florida, work in Florida, be in the Tampa area, you're limiting your opportunities. You got to be able to move all over the place. And broaden your horizons. If you want to do marketing, you don't have to do marketing for the Buccaneers or an NFL team. Marketing is marketing regardless of where you're doing it. A lot of the fundamental concepts are going to be the same. So if you broaden your horizons to other areas, your opportunities are going to be much greater to find a job.

Greg Lindberg:

Exactly. All great points. Yeah. I did want to ask you about the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on sports. Obviously for a while there a lot of sports were not playing, specifically pro, college sports. And what do you think, just in terms of your personal observations, what kind of effect has this pandemic had on the sports industry in general, and what's your projection, your outlook on how this will all unfold?

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Well the whole thing with COVID, one thing I've come to the conclusion about is nobody knows what's going on with COVID, because it seems like things are constantly changing with regards to guidelines and what we are supposed to be doing. But one of the things I think people are going to be more cautious about are going to sporting events because you are sitting so close to people, and I think the key for facilities is, how to help people be safe. So the way that they operate might end up changing, like making sure that you have hand sanitizer all over the place. I don't think that they're ever going to... Once we get to back to normal, I don't think it's going to affect necessarily how close you sit to people. I think people are going to want to get back out there. I think people are going to have cabin fever. They're going to want to get out there and enjoy their sports.

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Dr. Leon Mohan:

And so I'm not sure, long-term, how it's going to affect sports with regards to fans going and attending. What I would say is how it's affecting things now, all you have to do is just turn on the game and you can see all the empty seats. That's a lot of lost revenue right there. And one of the things that teams need to be probably look at is how do we raise revenue in other areas to make up for some of this lost revenue? And so I give my marketing class a perfect example. I watched Opening Day of baseball, I'm a Yankees fan so they're playing the Nationals, and you couldn't help but notice the seats in the back all had Delta on there. And so that's sponsorship dollars coming in that a lot of these other teams aren't taking advantage of.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

So I like to, in a marketing class, throw out some creative ideas. What if you had sections within the arena, on the seats, where businesses could buy sponsored space. So it's maybe just a little Delta sign on there. Because at the very least, the people that are in the arena are going to see it. And so being creative on how to generate revenue is something that sports organizations are going to have to figure out, at the very least over the next year. Because I think they're saying now we won't get back to normal until middle of next year at the very earliest, and so you got to think that's a lot of lost revenue, just by the ticket sales, the parking revenue, food and concessions that you're not generating any money off of because of COVID.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

And so that's how I see it affecting things right now. Even the sports bars, if you think about it from that standpoint, every Sunday sports bars are usually packed. I would imagine that they're getting hit with people not wanting to come out and people watching the games at home. So it's just interesting to watch this whole thing, in my opinion, unfold with the COVID. I don't know if that really answers your question, but it's just so hard to project what it's going to look like in my opinion.

Greg Lindberg:

Yeah, no. That's very well put, and I think the bottom line, you mentioned creativity just with anything we do in our lives we've had to be creative in how we do things that we would normally do a certain way but can't. And I think that concept can be applied to the sports industry, and across all industries really.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

It's even with us in the classroom. It's affected the way we teach, and for many of us it's been quite an adjustment with how we teach our classes. So it's definitely affecting I'd say all aspects of our normal life.

Greg Lindberg:

Exactly. No doubt. All right. And then to wrap up here, I did want to mention that if anyone is interested in learning more about this program you can check the show notes of this episode. You can also visit saintleo.edu and just search sport business on the website and find a lot more information on the program. So Dr. Leon Mohan, really appreciate your time here on the Saint Leo 306 Podcast and thanks so much for everything.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

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Thanks for having me. I appreciate inviting me on to talk about our program.

Greg Lindberg:

Absolutely. All righty. Thanks so much.

Dr. Leon Mohan:

Thanks. Bye.

Greg Lindberg:

Okay. Bye now.

Speaker 1:

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