

*Sport and Community on Campus: Constructing a Sport Experience that Matters*

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Abstract

Student affairs personnel are often charged with the task of creating a strong sense of community (SOC) on university campuses. Sport is among one of the many extracurricular activities that historically has been used to meet this need for community among students. Yet, how and when a SOC is created within a sport context has not been appropriately addressed in literature. Utilizing a community psychology theoretical framework, this study employed a grounded theory approach and uncovered the necessary factors for creating a SOC within an intercollegiate sport club setting. Twenty-one former university sport club participants were interviewed regarding their experiences. The results revealed that Common Interest, Leadership Opportunities, Amateurism/Voluntary Activity, and Competition were the most critical components to creating a SOC. The results contribute to community building theory and provide practical solutions for enhancing the intercollegiate sport experience. The implications and philosophical differences between athlete-directed intercollegiate sport experiences versus a more formalized varsity sport model are also discussed.