Eliminating Barriers to Youth Sports in Pitt County

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**Abstract**

This case study provides an opportunity for students to better understand barriers faced by low-income families participating in local sport opportunities and then offer creative solutions in an attempt to alleviate some barriers and create a more inclusive sports community. This case focuses on the recurring struggle that the Greenville Recreation and Parks Department (GRPD) faces when trying to increase diversity in youth sports programs and create inclusive programs for all youth, regardless of socioeconomic status. GRPD’s Development Intern, Sarah, identifies issues with the current financial assistance program that GRPD offers as well as collects feedback from community members detailing community needs that are not being met.

This case provides an opportunity for students to: 1) examine how sports organizations unintentionally create barriers for some members of the community; 2) develop inclusive systems in attempt to counteract identified barriers; 3) find innovative ways to eliminate barriers to youth sport participation.
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Case Study

Given that physical activity has so many well-known benefits, this case addresses the problematic decrease in the youth athletic participation rate from 44.5% to 36%, between the years of 2008 and 2018 (Solomon, 2018). For many, the cost of youth athletics is the main barrier. Simply playing, watching, and excelling in sports is dependent upon individuals, families, governments or private organizations resources (Coakley, 2017). For many families, money has to be prioritized for necessities such as food, water and shelter, leaving less discretionary income for youth athletic fees. This case focuses on the reoccurring struggle that the Greenville Recreation and Parks Department (GRPD) faces when trying to increase diversity in youth sports programs and create inclusive programs for all youth, regardless of socioeconomic status. This case outlines the current scholarship program that the GRPD offers as well as feedback from community members that details community needs that are not being met by GRPD. This case provides an opportunity for students to: 1) examine how sports organizations unintentionally create barriers for some members of the community; 2) develop a plan for inclusive systems in attempt to counteract identified barriers; 3) find innovative ways to eliminate barriers to youth sport participation. This case is intended for use in strategic management, contemporary sport issues/sport sociology class, non-profit development, and youth sport administration courses. It provides instructors with the opportunity to emphasize the importance of diversity and inclusion in addressing current issues in sport. The case also highlights how current research should play a key role in strategic, well-informed decision making and planning.
Sarah, a local college student, stood stunned in the 5th grade classroom she had been volunteering in for the past semester. The students adored her and loved asking her questions about her favorite sports to play, team to cheer for or shows to watch. Many of the students shared with Sarah that they have never had the opportunity to play on a sports team but dreamed about being able to one day. As Sarah reminisced on her life before college, playing on various sports teams had been some of her fondest memories. She had made the greatest friends, learned incredible life lessons, exercised for at least 60 minutes every day without realizing it and felt extremely connected to her community, all through her participation in local sport leagues. It was something she realized she took for granted, growing up in a two-parent, two income home a few hours away. Youth sport played an integral part of Sarah’s childhood, and it was heartbreaking for her to think that this group of 5th graders would not get that experience.

Sarah knew the facts surrounding youth sport. She took a sport management course the semester prior and learned about this emerging reality in our society. The numbers were etched in her mind, youth athletic participation in the United States decreased from 44.5% to 36%, between the years of 2008 and 2018 (Solomon, 2018). Simply playing, watching, and excelling in sports is dependent upon individuals, families, governments or private organizations resources (Coakley, 2017). Sarah’s professor was constantly reminding the class that parents worried about putting food on the table and keeping the lights on are not going to have the money for even a minimal registration fee let alone the more commercialized sport opportunities available. According to a survey done by the Aspen Institute, the average household income of families whose children participate in formalized youth sports is $90,908, much higher than U.S average of $59,039 (See Appendix I, Figures 1 & 2) (Youth Sports Facts, n.d.). Knowing and hearing the facts in class was one thing but seeing the reality among a group of 5th graders was another thing.
As part of Sarah’s coursework, she was tasked with finding a local problem and proposing solutions. Sarah would take this task to heart and wanted to address the issue of exclusivity in youth sports. She immediately drove over to the Greenville Recreation and Parks Department (GPRD) offices to see if she could help. She knew tax dollars funded the department, and also knew their goals were to be as inclusive as possible. After a conversation with the director, Sarah was offered the opportunity to take on the role as GPRD Development Intern for the upcoming semester. GPRD had recognized this issue, and also wanted to see it addressed. This opportunity would give Sarah an inside look on how a youth sport organization runs.

On the first day of her new internship, Sarah discussed the concerns she had personally observed in the community with John, the Assistant Director of GRPD, who would be serving as her internship supervisor. Although John was already aware of the problem, he was surprised to hear Sarah recalling her experience with the 5th graders. He explained to her the different youth sports opportunities that GRPD offers from summer camp, to seasonal leagues, to art and dance camps. Even though GRPD tries to keep their costs relatively low, there is still a fee associated with participating in any of these activities. Sarah assumed that this cost must be one of the main reasons keeping families from walking in the doors of GRPD and signing up.

John informed Sarah that there is currently a financial assistance program offered by GRPD to accommodate for some families that cannot afford the costs associated with playing formalized youth sports. If a financial assistance program already existed, why were more families not participating? What else was stopping parents from signing their kids up for sport opportunities they obviously desired to take part in?
Background on Greenville, North Carolina

Greenville, North Carolina is located in the eastern part of the state, in Pitt County. The current population of Greenville is 93,137 people, making it the 11th largest city in North Carolina. The median income for households in Greenville, NC is $36,486. The demographics in Greenville, NC are broken down to 53.99% white, 38.24% African American, 2.74% Asian, 2.44% two or more races, and 2.59% other races (Greenville, n.d.).

Greenville, NC is home to many different youth sport programs including, but not limited to The Greenville Recreation and Parks Department (GRPD), numerous privately funded sports leagues and two baseball leagues, including the Greenville North State Little League Team that made a Little League World Series run in 2017. The cost to participant in the city’s Little Leagues is $95. Although this is below the $150 national average for Little League registration costs, registration can cost as little as $30 in some cities and as much as $250 in some suburbs (Keshner, 2019). Greenville, NC is also home to a large Division I (DI) University, East Carolina University (ECU). ECU competes in 15 DI sports, is home to over 400 student athletes and is supported by one of the most loyal fan bases in college sports. Sports Illustrated even named Greenville, NC Sportstown USA for the immense amount of sporting activities and parks located in Greenville was well as the energetic sports atmosphere.

Background on Greenville Recreation and Parks (GRPD)

Across the United States, Recreation and Parks services are typically provided from one of three sectors: the public sector, the private sector, or non-profit organizations. The public sector is commonly known as recreation and parks agencies at the national, state, regional and local levels of government (Landes, 2004). GRPD is a city level organization operated and
funded by the City of Greenville. GRPD provides parks, recreational facilities, and programs all funded by local tax dollars for use by the general public. “The aim of community recreation and parks is to improve the quality of life for your residents, giving them opportunities to enhance their physical, social, spiritual, cultural and intellectual well-being” (Recreation & Parks, n.d.).

The GRPD provides a variety of athletic, recreational and arts and crafts activities for all ages and special populations. GRPD maintains over 25 parks and recreational facilities in the Greenville community including, but not limited to, gyms, swimming pools, soccer, baseball and softball complexes, parks, and playgrounds (Recreation & Parks, n.d.). GRPD prides themselves on cultivating a tremendous sense of community through “family, fun and foundation”. They promote involvement for a lifetime and teach not only skills for the courts and fields but life skills such as teamwork and conduct (Recreation & Parks, n.d.). The mission of GRPD is to advance parks, recreation and environmental conservation efforts that promote mental and physical health, serve as a deterrent to illegal or inappropriate behaviors and enhance Greenville’s quality of life.

GRPD currently offers baseball, basketball, fencing, flag football, golf, gymnastics, self-defense, soccer, swim clubs and tennis for youth. Seasonal teams are offered for each sport as well as clinics at varying centers and gyms. Prices vary from $25 to $135 depending on the type of program and duration of the program.

**Background on GRPD’s Financial Assistance Program**

GRPD offers a fee assistance program for families in need. Currently, GRPD does not have a specific amount of funds allocated for the financial assistance program. The financial assistance received by families results in a reduction in the overall revenue of the department.
Because no outside funding is raised, and city funding cannot be increased, there is no designated amount of money that can be used per year on scholarships. This creates a large inconsistency in if children can continue to participate from year to year, due to lack of advance knowledge on how much money can be allocated per year. Although GRPD wants to increase participation and diversity within their programs, they have to be cognizant of also driving revenue for the department to cover all costs and salaries, thus not being able to supply for the full demand of financial assistance needed in the community. To minimize the impact on the budget, GRPD limits each individual to a maximum of $150 per year in financial assistance. As of July 1 2019, 109 scholarships were issued during the 2019 fiscal year, totaling $10,266. Of that total, $5,892 has been used by scholarship recipients for program participation.

To be eligible to apply for the financial assistance program, you must be a Greenville resident and show proof of need in the form of a federal or state insurance card for low-income families or approved Free & Reduced school lunch application. Paperwork for the financial assistance program can be picked up at one recreation facility, located in a more affluent area of Greenville. This creates a challenge for many low-income families due to lack of public transportation within this area. Once the paperwork has been filled out, residents must bring the completed paperwork, proof of need, and proof of residency back into the specific recreation facility where they picked up the paperwork to be turned in and go through the approval process. If approved, you must pay a $10 deposit towards the program fee.

The Problem

Everyone in the GRPD business headquarters office where Sarah worked seemed to believe that the current financial assistance program was easily accessible to community
members. The office Sarah worked in was about a 10-15 minute drive away from all the other athletic and recreational facilities. As Sarah’s internship continued, she traveled around from center to center observing staff, families and athletic practices. She quickly realized the differences in demographics as she toured all of the different facilities. No facility operated quite the same as the other, yet they were all expected to use the same processes and guidelines. There seemed to be a huge disconnect between the administration located in the business headquarters office and the athletics staff working at the various recreational facilities. Some of the athletics staff believed their input, and the input of the parents who visited their facilities, was not being heard. Everyone was contributing different ideas on how to improve and better reach the surrounding community, but progress was at a standstill. Sarah decided she wanted to further research the matter and discover what specific barriers families were facing.

Sarah decided that the best way to understand the problem was to ask parents in the community themselves. Not only did she want to talk to current families participating in the financial assistance program on how it could be improved, but also families in the community that might not know about the program. She then worked with her university’s research board (i.e., IRB) to make sure she would gather the information in an appropriate and ethical manner. After receiving approval, and with the help of her supervisor and athletics staff at each center, Sarah was able to reach out to parents and block off times to be at each center to host the focus groups. Sarah also reached out to other community centers, such as faith-based family centers, in attempt to find families that currently do not participate in GRPD programs. Sarah found 20 parents that were willing to participate in focus groups to delve into the root of this problem and try to create innovative solutions. The demographics of participants in Sarah’s focus groups consisted of 55% African Americans, 20% Whites and 25% Hispanics.
The parents, mostly mothers, sat with Sarah in groups of 2-6 people and had long conversations detailing the barriers they, or people they know, have faced when attempting to get their kids involved in youth sports. With signed permission from the parents, the conversations were recorded so that Sarah could transcribe their conversations and find commonalities between all of the focus groups. All of the parent’s comments were kept anonymous so that they could freely speak their minds. Although Sarah was asking specific questions, and answers were being recorded, all of the conversations were very casual and friendly, allowing parents to speak their minds and collectively provide feedback and suggestions for GRPD and other local youth sport organizations.

After Sarah collected, coded and analyzed all the data, she found many reoccurring themes. The barriers she found most common within the community are lack of awareness, transportation, high costs to participate, ineffective communication and marketing, and lack of parental buy-in and connection with the youth sports programs. See Appendix I, figure 3 for a summary.

Within every focus group, the conversation of high costs to participate came up frequently. Parents stated that not only is there a fee to participate, but there are many other costs associated with playing as well. Families must provide all equipment and uniforms, besides the jersey or t-shirt provided. Buying cleats, bats, socks, balls, pads, etc. every season can become very expensive, especially if you have multiple children.

Transportation was the second most common barrier among parents. Many parents do not have access to a car, making getting their child to and from practice nearly impossible. There are numerous recreation centers in the Pitt County community, so most parents send their child to the one closest to their house, often walking distance. This is convenient for afterschool care and
activities, but when games and practices take place at a different facility, many children cannot
participate due to lack of transportation. Other parents stated that they do have access to a car but
have a family member that works night shifts or weekends, therefore, not being home to
transport a child to games. GRPD currently does not offer any sort of transportation system.

Another common theme Sarah discovered was the lack of knowledge and information
parents had about the scholarship program and GRPD’s programs in general. During the focus
groups, parents found the root of this problem to be in the marketing and communication
strategies. A lot of information is sent out via emails or advertised on the internet. Although this
reaches a large population at once, it is missing a large demographic of people who may not have
access to the internet or a computer on a regular basis. Many parents also stated that paper
advertisements are displayed, but only in select locations. Many of these locations are far from
certain Recreation centers such as South Greenville and Epps, centers located in more low-
income areas of the city. Some parents had no idea that scholarships even existed due to lack of
marketing to all members of the community rather than a more targeted approach.

After Sarah listened to all the parents she realized there was a huge gap between what
GRPD believed they were doing well, and the services and support the parents felt were being
offered to them. Sarah sat down with the leaders of GRPD and shared the results with them.
They also found this to be concerning and wanted to make changes to better support their
community and make their programs more supportive for all families. The GRPD tasked Sarah
and her internship supervisor with creating new guidelines for an inclusive system that would
attempt to break down the barriers families felt were standing in the way of participating in their
sports teams. What should Sarah’s next steps be in developing inclusive sport systems for
families in the Pitt County community? How will she effectively market these new systems to
increase accessibility and participation for low-income families?
Discussion Questions

1. How could GRPD redesign their financial assistance application and process to make it easier for families to access and complete?

2. What systems could GRPD initiate in order to address the following barriers?
   a. Transportation
   b. High Cost of Equipment
   c. Communication with Families

3. How would you effectively market the programs being offered through GRPD so more families are aware of the services they offer? How would you know more families are being reached by your marketing strategies?

4. One concern GRPD has about providing more financial assistance opportunities is losing revenue for their business and not fully being able to support the demand of community members in need. What types of fundraisers could the GRPD hold to raise money for scholarships?

5. What outside organizations could GRPD potentially partner with to fill gaps within their organization? How could a relationship between GRPD and an outside organization be mutually beneficial?

6. What types of events could GRPD host in order to promote diversity? (Given the restrictions faced during the 2020 pandemic, offer both in-person and virtual options.)
Teaching Notes

This case study provides an opportunity for students to better understand barriers faced by low-income families in terms of participating in local sport opportunities. The case provides students with the ability to first identify barriers and then offer creative solutions in an attempt to alleviate some barriers and create a more inclusive sports community. This case focuses on the reoccurring yet timely struggle that the Greenville Recreation and Parks Department (GRPD) encounters when trying to increase diversity in youth sports programs and create inclusive programs for all youth, regardless of socioeconomic status. The case is especially timely due to the financial impacts of COVID-19 as youth sports organizations will most likely continue to struggle in increasing diversity in the upcoming future (Warner & Martin, 2020). A recent poll indicated “49% of parents believe their children will be less likely to participate in youth sports due to financial circumstances” (Baker & Tracy, 2020). Thus, this case represents an ongoing and opportune time to address the issue as youth sports organizations will face a major crisis in making youth sport more accessible across racial and economic divides due to the ongoing affects the of the pandemic (Warner & Martin, 2020). In this case, GRPD’s Development Intern, Sarah, identifies issues with the current financial assistance program that the GRPD offers as well as collects feedback from community members that details community needs that are not being met by GRPD. This case provides an opportunity for students to: 1) examine how sports organizations unintentionally create barriers for some members of the community; 2) develop inclusive systems in attempt to counteract identified barriers; 3) find innovative ways to eliminate barriers to youth sport participation.
Instructor Use and Learning Objectives

This case was written for use in both undergraduate and graduate strategic management, contemporary sport issues/sport sociology class, non-profit development, and youth sport administration courses. It is recommended that this case be used during units focused on non-profit development, youth sport participation and/or fundraising and event development. It provides instructors with the opportunity to emphasize how current issues in sport can be solved with strategic, well-informed, thinking. The case also highlights how gathering data and current research should inform decision making and planning.

First, general discussion questions and suggested responses are provided for the instructor, as well as suggested class activities. Second, content specific uses for graduate or more focused undergraduate courses will be provided for instructors that would like to implement further learning activities.

Instructors who assign this case and implement the activities associated with this case in their curriculum will find their students able to do the following:

- Identify barriers many families face when trying to get involved in youth sports leagues.
- Discuss ways that organizations can make processes, such as registration, accessible to all families regardless of socioeconomic status.
- Create systems (policies and guidelines) that can be implemented by organizations to help alleviate barriers.
- Develop a fundraising plan.
- Connect how insights learned from this case study can be transferred to other sports organizations in their own community.
General Discussion Questions and Suggested Responses

Instructors can use the following discussion questions provided at the end of the student case and suggested activities to facilitate more detailed discussions and evaluate student learning.

1. **How could GRPD redesign their financial assistance application and process to make it easier for families to access and complete?**

   Answers will vary, but students should identify that providing forms for the financial assistance program at only one GRPD location is not practical for families not living in that area, especially families that may lack transportation. Instead, financial assistance forms should be located at all GRPD locations, so that families may pick them up at any center they frequent. The forms should also be on the GRPD website, so that families may fill them out at home, if they have access to a computer and internet. This would also make it possible for families to access them in places that offer public internet connection such as the library. To ensure that community members, outside current GRPD participants, know about the financial assistance program, applications should also be sent home from the children’s schools. This would require GRPD to cultivate a relationship with Pitt County Public Schools. GRPD could ask to send home the financial assistance application, as well as a booklet of all sports and activities being offered that season, with all students. Forms should be provided in English and Spanish to better include the large Latino population in Pitt County. After the applications are reviewed by GRPD staff, a notification should be sent to families via phone call and letter to their home, to inform them if their application has been approved or denied. It is not feasible to require all families to come back and forth to the one specified center to see if their child has been approved for a scholarship.
2. What systems could GRPD initiate in order to address the following barriers?

a. Transportation

In order to accommodate for families that do not have access to a car or a parent that can transport them to and from practice, some type of carpooling system should be created. Coaches or GRPD staff could implement a carpooling system for different teams by putting all parents in contact with one another and creating a platform for them to request or offer rides. Many kids who play on the same team also attend the same school, so parents could rotate picking up from school and taking the kids to practice. In the focus groups, many families stated that they would be willing to do this on days that they did not have to work during practice or game times but did not have any way of getting in contact or even knowing the parents of other kids on the team. Because GRPD cannot provide transportation for every child, creating a platform and open dialogue between parents, would allow for more kids to get to and from practice and games regardless of personal transportation issues. One platform that could be utilized is the GoKid app, which is a free ride sharing app with parents that you trust. You can import a team’s schedule directly into the app and parents can organize rides to and from practices and games (GoKid, 2020).

b. High Cost of Equipment

Many families have excess equipment in their homes that their children cannot use because of outgrowing it or switching to another sport. For many families, most of this equipment has only been used for one or two seasons. GRPD should implement an Equipment Swap within their organization. Families could bring in
excess equipment such as bats, helmets, cleats, shin guards, gloves, etc. that they are not using for weeks leading up to the drive. Families could then come back at assigned times to pick up equipment that their child could use for the current season. Families that are a part of the financial assistance program should have access to the equipment first, in order to ensure that their child has the equipment they need regardless of financial hardships.

c. Communication with Families

Parents need to be informed about opportunities. It is vital that GRPD staff and coaches communicate well to make sure all kids are able to stay engaged. It is important for parents to know all expectations and guidelines, as well as have an opportunity to voice concerns or give suggestions to the coaches and GRPD staff. Families should be given a welcome packet after registering their child for a specific sports team or camp that details the practice schedule, game schedule, equipment needs, and anything else the parent may need to know. This packet could also serve as a way for GRPD to market other programs by including fliers for other upcoming camps. Coaches should set up a parents’ meeting before the first practice that all parents will be encouraged to attend, if their schedule allows. This meeting would give parents the opportunity to meet the coaches their child will be working with, meet other parents, and have an opportunity to voice any concerns or suggestions about the team. For families that have access to a cell phone, setting up a team communication platform such as GroupMe would be helpful as a way to send updates, reminders or any cancellations.
3. How would you effectively market the programs being offered through GRPD so more families are aware of the services they offer? How would you know more families are being reached by your marketing strategies?

*Answers will vary.* Marketing strategies and campaigns must reach their target audience in order to be effective. GRPD and Sarah first need to identify their target audience which would be anyone in the Greenville community with a child aged 4-18. Their target audience for marketing all of their programs will include all demographics including race, gender, socioeconomic status, geographical location, etc., while marketing their financial assistance program needs to be targeted towards lower-income families.

Currently, GRPD uses mainly online platforms to market their programs. Although they intend to market to all demographics, online marketing unintentionally targets more affluent families who have access to computers, smartphones, Wi-Fi, cable television, etc. Putting an emphasis on print marketing and face-to-face marketing will help GRPD truly market programs to all demographics. In order to market their programs to new families, GRPD needs to ensure that their marketing materials are being placed in all parts of the community. Hanging fliers and banners around the community is an effective way to market the start of the season for specific sports. Ideal locations would include popular restaurants, community centers, public libraries and office buildings, in all parts of the City of Greenville. Another effective marketing strategy would be to provide handouts and booklets of sports and camp offerings to all public schools. This information could be sent home with every kid to ensure all families have access to the materials. In order to reengage families that have already participated in GRPD programs, postcards can be sent to every house of current GRPD participants to remind them of
upcoming registrations for sports and camps. Informative materials can also be sent home with each family after the last game of a particular sports season, informing them of what registrations will be opening up next. Overall, there needs to be more targeted marketing devoted to the financial assistance program. The financial assistance program needs to be mentioned on all promotional materials, so that families know there are opportunities for them to participate regardless of socioeconomic status.

4. **One concern GRPD has about providing more financial assistance opportunities is losing revenue for their organization and not fully being able to support the demand of community members in need. What types of fundraisers could the GRPD hold to raise money for scholarships?**

*Answers will vary.* One way that GRPD could raise more money for scholarships is by creating a non-profit, 501(C)(3) organization in conjunction with the Recreation department. This would allow GRPD to raise money through corporate sponsorships and donors. GRPD could publicize their financial assistance program to corporations and local businesses and ask them to donate money towards the scholarship fund, in exchange for marketing of their business, for example their logo being featured on game jerseys.

Another fundraiser the GRPD could initiate would be a “Donate A Season” program. Since the GRPD keeps costs to participate relatively low, the registration cost is not seen as a high financial barrier for more affluent families in the community. By placing a “donate a season” option on the registration forms, families that could afford it, would be able to donate the registration fee to a student that needs financial assistance. GRPD could also host local fundraisers within the community. GRPD should focus on leveraging assets that they have access to, such as the local university’s Division I
athletes that may have come through the program. By partnering with the sports
department at the local university, the DI athletes could host a sports clinic for GRPD
athletes. This also serves as an opportunity for the University to positively promote itself
by getting involved in the community, creating an equal partnership between the
University and the Recreation and Parks Department.

5. What outside organizations could GRPD potentially partner with to fill gaps within
their organization? How could a relationship between GRPD and an outside
organization be mutually beneficial?

*Answers will vary.* GRPD could potentially with other sports organizations that focus on
diversity and inclusion or other foundations that could help them provide more funding
for their scholarships. A potential organization that GRPD could partner with would be
the Jackie Robinson Baseball League. In the past, the Jackie Robinson Baseball League
has talked about the potential of sponsoring a Greenville Little League Team. GRPD
could potentially talk to them about sponsoring a part of their scholarship program such
as the equipment needs of scholarship athletes.

6. What types of events could GRPD host in order to promote diversity?

GRPD could implement different events in order to promote diversity in their community
and within their organization. One event they could celebrate is Jackie Robinson Day that
many other sports organizations such as the MLB observe each year. GRPD could
celebrate this event to educate their community on who Jackie Robinson is and celebrate
diverse athletes in their community. GRPD could also host community events during
Black History month or Hispanic Heritage month. During Black History month, GRPD
could host a festival one weekend where families could come out and participate in a
scavenger hunt to learn more about African American athletes, watch a movie featuring athletes of color such as 42, and participate in a skills clinic with diverse coaches and college athletes in their community. Due to COVID-19, events need to be offered virtually as well. Instead of showing a movie in person, you could invite families to participate in a movie viewing together online and then have a group discussion about the movie via a platform such as Zoom.

**Suggested Class Activities**

1. Students should research other publicly funded sports organizations, such as the Recreation and Parks Departments in their area or surrounding areas, in order to identify if other organizations have a financial assistance or scholarship program. Students should then list out any similarities and differences between the financial assistance program they found and GRPD’s financial assistance program. Include any suggestions of things other organizations “do well” that the GRPD could adopt into their own program.

2. Students should draft a mock Financial Assistance Application and Application Steps & Guidelines document to provide to families. Students should focus on making these documents as effective and efficient as possible, explaining each step in simple, easy to follow terms. The application should be professional and easy to complete. Students can give suggestions on how they feel the application should be distributed (hard copies, via the website, etc.). The Steps and Guidelines document should give families all of the information they need to know about the financial assistance program such as who can apply, what documents you need to be eligible, where to submit the form, when you should expect to hear an answer, etc.
3. Students should be asked to write and present a fundraising pitch that could be used to generate corporate partnerships or donations in support of the financial assistance program. Students may choose to focus on a corporate partnership, such as a sporting goods store donating equipment in return for their logo or company name being branded on team uniforms, or corporate and individual donations directly to the scholarship fund. The fundraising pitch should include all of the pertinent details such as organization name, description of the organization, explanation of the financial assistance program, and how the donation will be used. Students should practice with a partner, give and receive feedback and then present the pitch to the entire class.

Content Specific Uses For Graduate or More Focused Undergraduate Courses

Rising Costs to Youth Sport Participation

For instructors utilizing this case to illustrate the increasing commercialization of youth and lack of accessibility to youth sports for low income families, it is suggested that Kahma’s (2010) work, Sport and Social Class: The Case of Finland, be assigned as background reading before students are assigned this case study. This article focuses on the physical activity levels and sports participation levels of different social classes, with low social classes participating significantly less.

Graduate school instructors that wish to guide a more in-depth discussion about the rising costs of youth sports are encouraged to assign Mark Hyman’s book, ‘The Most Expensive Game in Town, The Rising Cost of Youth Sports and The Toll on Today’s Families” (2012) as a prerequisite reading. Hyman goes into detail about all of the costs associated with playing youth sports in today’s society, including the costs to register, travel, buy equipment, etc. Many of
these costs are recognized as barriers to participation by families in the Greenville area. Most students, unless they have children participating in sport, are unaware of the associated costs.

**Learning Activity: Rising Costs to Youth Sport Participation**

**Student Instructions:**

After reading Kahma (2010) and/or Hyman (2012), create an itemized list of everything included in the high costs of participating in organized youth sport leagues. This should include everything from costs to register, buy equipment, travel, etc. You should then find prices of each of the items on your list based on websites for different sporting goods stores, sports organizations, large tournaments, etc. GRPD registration prices can be found on their website, or you may use the price of any other youth sports organization, such as one that you participated in. After creating an itemized and priced list of all the expenses, you should then decide on a dollar amount that each scholarship should provide for the youth sports organization that you chose. Provide reason for the amount you decided on by discussing the prices of each item you researched.

The following is an example of a student response:

**Organization Name: GRPD Greenie League Baseball Ages 7-9**

**Registration Costs:** $35

**Equipment Costs:** $210

- Bat: $49.99 (Dick’s Sporting Goods)
- Glove: $34.99 (Dick’s Sporting Goods)
- Cleats: $24.99 (Dick’s Sporting Goods)
- Socks: $10 (Dick’s Sporting Goods)
- Helmet: $29.99 (Dick’s Sporting Goods)
Pants: $35.00 (Dick’s Sporting Goods)
Jersey: Provided
Hat: Provided
Bat Bag: $24.99 (Dick’s Sporting Goods)

State Tournament: No Tournament for this age group
Hotel Costs: N/A
Travel to Tournament: N/A
Scholarship Amount Provided: $185

Justification: The registration fee to participate in this particular baseball league is $35. Equipment costs based on the average price at Dick’s Sporting Goods for each item totaled around $210. $185 should be given in scholarship to participate in this baseball league to cover registration and the costs of most equipment for families in need. There is no necessary travel to tournaments for this particular baseball league, so no scholarship funds would be necessary for tournament costs, hotel costs and travel costs.

Fundraising Planning

Fundraising is one of the main initiatives GRPD needs to undertake in order to raise monetary funds that can be allocated to financial assistance scholarships. It is suggested that students read Robert Fogal’s chapter (2010), “Designing and Managing the Fundraising Program”. This chapter emphasizes the importance of fundraising for all non-profit organizations and addresses ways to integrate fundraising into an organization’s life.

Fogal’s work details three stages of fundraising development which represent the steps through which nonprofits progress when developing fundraising programs. The three stages to
fundraising development include the formative stage which consists of only fundraising to stay afloat, the normative stage which includes developing relationships with donors and the integrative stage where philanthropy is placed at the center of who the business is and what they do (Fogal, 2010). By understanding these stages, students will be able to better develop fundraising initiatives and plans that GRPD could implement. Fogal discusses the important of strong management during the creation and execution fundraising programs, as well as creating a strong team with strong ethical values. The instructor may lead a discussion on who to include on a fundraising team, the pros of cons of creating a fundraising team, and issues that may come up when planning and executing different fundraising programs.

Learning Activity: Fundraising Planning

Student Instruction:

GRPD needs to raise monetary funds in order to support the need of financial assistance in the Greenville community. Not only can GRPD secure sponsorships with corporations in the community, but they can also host their own fundraisers. Create a fundraising plan for one event you will host next year to raise money for the scholarship program. Be sure to include all the details of the event, your timeline for planning the event, your event planning team, and what your goals are for the event.

An example of a fundraising event is outlined below:

One asset that GRPD has access to is the university close by. East Carolina University (ECU) is home to a plethora of Division I athletes. For this fundraiser, DI athletes from ECU will host a skills clinic for kids in the community.
The first step in planning this fundraiser is to contact the athletic director at ECU. The athletic director will need to put me in contact with coaches as well as approve the usage of ECU fields and equipment. After deciding on a date with the athletic director and getting his approval, I will contact the ECU coaches for the sports currently in off-season, since they will not be traveling or playing on the weekends.

The decided date for our fundraiser is Saturday, October 10th from 9am-12pm. Kids will have the opportunity to work on drills with Division I athletes and coaches in the following sports: Baseball/Softball, Basketball and Lacrosse. Kids will be split up by age groups and rotate through 3 sessions, one session with each sport. The fee for this skills clinic will be $30 per child. All money will go towards the financial assistance program.

We will begin marketing this clinic during GRPD summer camps in July and August. Families may register on the GRPD website or through filling out the form and turning it in to any of the GRPD locations in Greenville. We will also create fliers and posters to hang up in all GRPD locations, restaurants around the community, around the ECU campus and at local parks.

Our goal for this fundraiser is to raise $1800. We hope to have 60 kids participate in this skills clinic for $30 each, totaling $1800. Another goal for the fundraiser is for ECU to donate the rental of the fields and equipment, so that there are no costs for this event.

**Social Issues & Diversity**

This case also can be utilized to cultivate discussions on the relationship between sport and social issues, discuss social class divides in the context of sport, understand the interplay
among sport and the economy, and understand problems that arise in the USA from differences in age, ethnicity, culture, national origin, ability, etc. Instructors of Contemporary Sport and Social Issues courses can use the case as a supplemental activity and learning tool. For a focus on sport and social class, the previously mentioned readings should be assigned prior to the case (Kahma, 2010; Hyman, 2012); however, for instructors that wish to focus more on diversity and inclusion it is encouraged that students read Cunningham’s work (e.g., Cunningham, 2019), as well as works found within both the sport and leisure literature before reading the case study (e.g., Adair, Taylor, & Darcy, 2010; KangJae, Casper, & Floyd, 2020). These works identify the issues related to race, social class, ethnicity, and so on present at various levels of youth sport and highlight the need for communication and change at all levels of youth sport. Whether the focus is on change related to interpersonal relationships among participants or change related to policies within the youth sport organization, these works provide guidance for the reader.

For instructors wishing to highlight the diversity and inclusion aspects of the case, the following learning activities and/or discussion can be assigned.

Learning Activity: Social Issues & Diversity

Student Instructions:

Despite best intentions, GRPD’s youth programs lack diversity. One primary impediment is cost. There are several grant programs that exist for publicly funded youth sport organizations, some of which are aimed at providing assistance in participant diversity and inclusion. By securing one of these grants, GRPD would be able to cover the cost for those in financial need. Students should do a web search to locate the best grant program possibility by matching GRPD’s mission to the grant submission criteria. After the grant is identified, create a
one-page proposal to present to the director of GRPD to convince him that taking the time to
produce and submit a grant to this organization is a worthwhile endeavor.

GRPD would also benefit from assigning the duties of or hiring an Outreach Coordinator.

Ideally, this individual would communicate with parents and children in underserved areas,
create open dialogue among these communities and the organization, and design community
outreach initiatives to meet their needs. Given the current status of diversity, this person also
would have an understanding of the relationship that exists between race and socioeconomic
status as well as local demographic information. Create a job description to post for the purposes
of hiring an Outreach Coordinator. Identify what experience is required, level and type of
education, background needed, and so on. Further, justify the inclusion of this person to the staff
of GRPD and although adding this person to the staff may not be financially feasible it is
important to have a plan in place should funding become available.

Instructor Notes: Results

GRPD has been able to use the barriers discovered in the focus groups to plan out ways
to eliminate barriers to youth sports within their organization. The first step GRPD is looking at
taking is creating a non-profit organization in conjunction with the Recreation department of
GRPD. This non-profit organization would serve to raise monetary funds for the financial
assistance program, so that funds for scholarships do not come out of the GRPD’s revenue, as it
does with the current system. If GRPD could raise money for scholarships through corporate
sponsors and individual donors, GRPD would be able to better accommodate the need for
financial assistance in the community and better advertise the financial assistance program to
members of the community. By creating a 501(c)(3) organization, donations would also be tax
deductible for all donors using the non-profits Tax Identification Number.

GRPD is also looking at other ways to alleviate some of the barriers. They hope to create
a new application process in the future to better accommodate for families in all parts of the
Greenville community, and make the process more user friendly. Recently, GRPD created a new
position within their organization, the Recreation Outreach Coordinator. This position was
created to implement the new marketing and communication initiatives that GRPD has created in
order to cultivate more awareness of their programs, including the scholarship program, and to
increase diversity. The Recreation Outreach Coordinator will create a work team to help with the
development of the non-profit organization as well as to establish plans for carpooling systems or
equipment drives in the near future.
References


