

Brian P. McCullough, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Sport Administration & Leadership Program, Seattle University
Spoke with Melina Diamantopoulou, Head of Production at Climate Action about **all things sport & sustainability**

Melina: Could you tell us about and what are the latest sustainable initiatives your organisation has put in place?



Brian: At Seattle University we have created the **world's first** graduate certificate in Sport Sustainability Leadership through the Albers School of Business and Economic. The certificate is offered fully online and can be completed in nine months.



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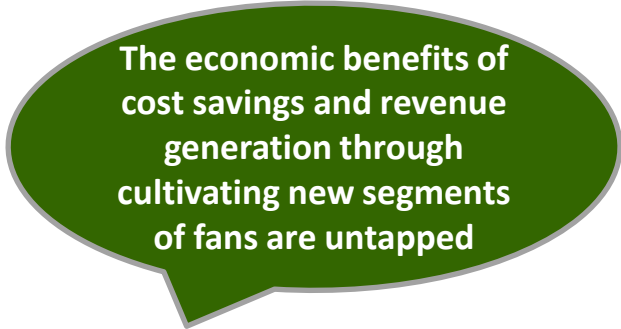
We have had students from all over the world enroll into the program. We are currently accepting applications for our fourth cohort, which starts in September 2018 with a completion date of June 2019. Our students complete four courses and a capstone class.

Throughout the courses our curriculum focuses on sustainability reporting, strategic planning, marketing and communications, financing, event management, and facility operations. Students gain a wealth of knowledge on the processes and data behind GRI, ISO, LEED, Council for Responsible Sport, and other reporting and certification standards.

Melina: Could you tell us a bit more about your work and projects?

Brian: I believe it is very important for students to receive the most current methods and data available from the industry. I am actively engaged in research focusing on environmental sustainability in the sport sector. I focus on three areas: managerial decision-making processes to engage in environmental sustainability and the subsequent steps, fan engagement campaigns that evaluate the effectiveness of campaign messaging and evaluation of behavioral change, and the evaluation of fan behaviors and the environmental impact of those behaviors. I continue to work in these three areas but specifically I am working on evaluating sustainability campaign messaging of various sport events/organizations, evaluating what sustainability initiatives are most important/relevant to sport fans, and creating an assessment of the environmental impact of sport spectators.

Further, students are then able to apply my research and research from others in their various classes. This level of awareness and understanding allows for students to take a **different approach to advancing the sustainability movement within the sport sector**. To this end, students apply this transfer of rich knowledge in their assignments as they work directly with sport organizations, whether with their employer or not, to create or enhance their sustainability efforts and engagement.



Melina: What do you see as the key requirements for an orderly and efficient move to a lower footprint in the sports industry?

Brian: The first key requirement would be to **get all sport organizations involved**. The sport sector has a tremendous amount of social influence but also a tremendous amount of buying power. Imagine if all sport organizations from community level sport to professional all desired to be zero waste, carbon neutral or even just compost. That collective would have tremendous influence among vendors.

The second key requirement would be for sport managers and practitioners to **educate themselves on the best practices** and strategic choices necessary to support a comprehensive and robust sustainability program. This educational factor is extremely important because of the timeliness of this issue and the sensitivities of the industry to actively engage in such initiatives.

The third key requirement would be to get sport organizations proactively engaged in the following areas: **transportation, energy, food, waste and water**. If all engaged sport organizations can start here, we would make a major strides in meeting the Paris Agreement goal of carbon neutrality. This would increase the creditability and legitimacy of sport organizations as good stewards of the natural environment. This then can align with the brand and become part of its DNA.

The fourth requirement would be to **actively engage sport fans** to participate in sustainability initiatives at the event/facility but also in their everyday lives. The buying power of the sport industry can then be magnified even further by incorporating and involving the billions of sport fans throughout the world.

Melina: What do you see as the main challenges for becoming more sustainable within the sports industry? And how do you think they could be alleviated?

Brian: The main challenges that the sport sector faces to be more sustainable involve knowledge and understanding. This is not to say that all sport managers or practitioners do not know what they are doing. In fact, we have many examples of individuals, teams, leagues/federations, and organizing bodies that are very knowledgeable, but we still have misperceptions of how fans and other stakeholders will react to an active push by sport to actively engage and promote environmental sustainability. There is the educational component of what environmental sustainability looks like in practice and the strategic process that is necessary to build a comprehensive and robust sustainability program. **This is a marathon not a sprint; however, we must start running now!** The economic and environmental benefits for being environmentally responsible are too great to ignore such a strategic decision.

Education is key whether it is through meetings like this, informal networks that organically develop, or through formal education. Our certificate program enriches the knowledge base of practitioners whether they have little or extensive experience with sustainability initiatives in or beyond the sport industry. These classes help increase the sophistication through incorporating data collection and analysis that coincides with sustainability reporting and certification programs.

Melina: As a speaker in the forthcoming Sustainable Innovation in Sports 2018, what do you think can be achieved in terms of outcomes of the Forum?

Brian: It is important to stress the great influence of the sport industry especially with a cause that is so closely related to the aesthetics of sport – the natural environment. Moreover, the timeliness of action is important. **The time to act and engage is now.** Collectively we need to advance this cause by starting to engage our sport organizations with environmental sustainability. It is easy to see through a risk assessment the consequences of inaction and the tremendous benefits of being proactive beyond persevering the environment. The economic benefits of cost savings and revenue generation through cultivating new segments of fans are untapped and unrealized to a vast majority of sport organizations with the exception of a few early adapters.



Sustainable Innovation in Sport is the only high-level European meeting to bring together stakeholders and influencers innovating in the **sports sustainability sector; Governments, UN, sports leagues and clubs, governing bodies, brands, sports venues, NGOs and broadcasters**, to discuss the unique **opportunity** that the realm of **sports** offers the **climate change effort**.

The Forum will take place on **2nd & 3rd May 2018** at the **Amsterdam Arena**, the world's leading smart playground.

Event Highlights Include

- + **Crucial topics to drive sustainability in sport forward, including:**
 - **Financing sustainability projects and projected return on investment**
 - **Building more sustainable, innovative and safer sport venues**
 - **Sustainable sports culture in mega sport events**
 - **Creating sustainable memories and influencing your fans**
- + **World leading sustainability speakers from IOC, UEFA, BBC Sport, Aviva Stadium, Wimbledon, Formula E, Philadelphia Eagles, Roland Garros, Arsenal, Land Rover BAR**
- + **The Sport & Sustainability International (SandSI) annual General Assembly meeting**
- + **Sustainability Innovation Tour of the Amsterdam Arena**
- + **Panel discussions and round tables for optimal deep dive discussions and networking**
- + **An exhibition of cutting edge innovations making sustainability in sport a reality**

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