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ISU Sport Management student Pat Bodame collects surveys from fans at the MVC Basketball Tournament in St. Louis.

Sport Management Program lands major research project with Missouri Valley Conference

Do Missouri Valley Conference basketball fans know who league sponsors are?

That was one of the primary questions posed to a group of Illinois State sport management faculty and students by former program graduate Mike Nelson this past winter. Nelson was working for the MVC and looking to help MVC sponsors recognize the benefits they receive through their partnership with the league. To do this, he turned to the Illinois State Sport Management program.

The Illinois State team, in consultation with administrators from the Missouri Valley Conference and executives from State Farm Insurance, the league's title sponsor, began formulating questions to use in a spectator survey. The end result was a 22-question survey, which the team then administered to fans at a home game for each of the 10 MVC schools. A student and faculty research team also admin-

istered the survey at the MVC tournament, held March 4-7 at the Scottrade Center in St. Louis.

"Working on the MVC/State Farm project was a great opportunity for me to be a part of an in-depth research project," said graduate student participant Liz Holcomb. "Being a part of the project from start to finish, I was able to see how relevant the information we provided was for both the Valley and the MVC and their business partnership. Overall it was a rewarding and informative experience."

All told, the team collected more than 3,000 surveys. In addition, Chad McEvoy conducted 39 personal interviews with spectators at various games to assist with data collection. Once all the information was collected, Holcomb entered the results of all those surveys into a database, allowing the research team to conduct statistical analyses on the information collected. The team looked at recognition and recall rates for sponsors, as well as information about how fans became aware of sponsors and how long they have been following MVC

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Survey collection team at a Redbird game. (l to r) Michelle Krischel, Kimbra Fuestring, Chad McEvoy, Nels Popp, Dan Goodwin, Alex Totura, Scott Krapf, and Jen Madgiak



Jack Schmitz, Mike Schulte, and Tony Margherio take a break from collecting surveys at a Missouri State basketball game.





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Have you been recently hired or promoted? Help us maintain our records and continue building networking opportunities for both our past and current students with Redbird Connections. Just visit today!

Or you can send us your updated information or accomplishments to Chad McEvoy (cdmcevo@IllinoisState.edu) or Nels Popp (npopp@IllinoisState.edu) with your latest achievements and contact information.

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From the program coordinator



Sport management alumni, students, and friends:

As you'll read throughout this newsletter, the 2009–2010 year has been a great one for our program. Highlights include our class trip to St. Louis in October, hosting a regional sport business networking event in March, and conducting research for the Missouri Valley Conference this spring. Additionally, our faculty has spent considerable time over the past 18 months revising our program's curriculum. Curricular changes include adding two new courses—a facility and event management course and an advanced event management course. The advanced event management course, which will be an elective that students can take in their second year, will be practically-oriented with the students managing an actual event from start-to-finish. We have also converted our advanced sport marketing course from an elective to a required course. This class will now have more of a sales emphasis, as we know that having the ability to sell tickets and sponsorships is often a path of entry into the sport industry job market for many. Finally, we are eliminating our management course and replac-

ing it with a course titled, The Sport Industry. This new course will provide an overview of the industry, focusing on governance and management issues. Students will take this course in their first semester in the program, providing a foundation for understanding how the sport industry works as students begin their plan of study.

Please continue to keep in touch with us. We love hearing from our alums and friends and learning what's new with you, both professionally and personally. I hope all is well.

Chad McEvoy

Coordinator of the Sport Management Program
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basketball. They also collected demographic information, allowing results to be categorized by things such as age, gender, and income level.

All results were then collated into a 50-page report, which was shared as part of a presentation to the Missouri Valley Conference administrative staff and marketing executives at State Farm Insurance. Overall, the report earned high accolades from the MVC staff including Conference Commissioner Doug Elgin.

"I was greatly impressed with the data collection and with the presentation and interaction by you and your colleagues," Elgin wrote to McEvoy. "[Your team's] involvement was appreciated. I thoroughly enjoyed watching the process and presentation."

While the results of the study are not allowed to be shared publicly, the process itself was an outstanding learning experience for both students and faculty.

"I think doing a hands-on, real life project like this is terrific experience for our students," said Assistant Professor of Sport Management

Nels Popp. "We can talk about sponsorship issues in our classes, but having students in the field doing this sort of research really shows how important these issues are in the sport industry."

Illinois State sport management faculty are also hopeful that the positive response they received on this project could lead to future research activities.

"This really could open some doors for us down the road," said Popp. "We hope that by building connections with organizations like the Missouri Valley, State Farm, and Learfield Sports, and showing them the type of work our program is capable of producing, we could see future projects also come our way. This is not only beneficial for our program, but can also help students as they graduate and search for jobs."

In addition, the Missouri Valley Conference also made a donation to the University's Sport Management Program. The gift will allow the program to fund future educational opportunities.

Tracking the Redbirds—alumni update

Alumni spotlight: Nancy Worley '83

Employer: University of Louisville Athletics
Position title: Associate Director of Sports Information
Location: Louisville, Kentucky



What are some of the unique opportunities you have had with your job?

One of the most unique opportunities I have with my job was when I accompanied the University of Louisville volleyball team on a five-week tour of Germany, Austria, Italy, and Russia in 2001. I have been lucky enough to go and utilize my sports information director skills at Final Fours in basketball, the College World Series, Kentucky Derbies, the Olympics, and numerous Bowl Games. I have met sports legends like Karch Kiraly, Johnny Unitas, Tommy LaSorda, David Robinson, John Wooden, Pat Day, and Muhammad Ali among others. I also worked alongside of unsung heroes who give their lives, talent, and loyalty to athletes and athletics, and sometimes barely make in a year what a high profile coach makes in a month. The same goes for some of the finest people I know who played their sports with love and passion without any promise of a headline, a draft pick, a paycheck, or even a home crowd.

What is the toughest part of your job?

The toughest part of being a sports information director has to be the incredibly long hours we must log to be effective at our jobs. We need to be the first at the venue and the last to leave, and it can take a toll on your family and your social life. Luckily, I have worked in a family-friendly department where we all bring our kids with us whenever possible. My two children grew up as gym rats and are successful athletes themselves. I am also extremely lucky to have a spouse who understands the demands on my time and acts as a nonjudgmental sounding board who doesn't mind helping me carry media guide boxes up and down stairs. Another part of the job that can be tough is dealing with coaches whose livelihoods depend on the capricious whims of pimply, neurotic, overgrown teenagers with raging hormones which make the coaches half crazed and rampantly paranoid. I tell my protégés to remember: "Coaches are not like normal people." Bless their little hearts.

(That's what you say in Kentucky to soften a blunt truism.)

What are your favorite memories from Illinois State?

I have so many fond memories of my time as a Redbird. I worked sports information, took graduate classes, and worked at Shanigan's Bar in Bloomington as a bartender/waitress. I would have early classes, work lunch at Shanigan's, work in sports information, and then go back to Shanigan's for the night shift. Somewhere in there I studied and was an unapologetic social butterfly. I slept about four hours a night and I was never tired. (Youth is so wasted on the young.) I shared an office in Hovey Hall that was the size of a well-appointed broom closet with a then-chain smoking Tom Lamonica and had a 20-year old typewriter that weighed more than a Buick. I led the Missouri Valley Conference in parking tickets and contact highs from White-Out correction fluid, rubber cement, and secondhand smoke.

My fondest memory seems so naive now. Illinois State made the NCAA Tournament in 1982–1983 and got sent down to Tampa, Florida for the first round in the Sun Dome. I had to drive the cheerleaders down in a big van all the way from Normal and then stayed with six highly-caffeinated cheerleaders per room. Sadly, the Redbirds lost and I thought my heart would break. (I have since hardened my heart after 50 years of cheering for the Cubs.) We didn't have a budget to stay afterwards, so I had to load up the weepy cheerleaders and drive them all the way back by myself as no one else could drive a stick shift. And I was thrilled beyond belief. Well except for the flat tire in Farmer City in the snow.

I was so excited that one of my teams was on television that I ran to the press room and took pictures of the television screen because I didn't own a VCR. Ok, that made me sound really old. Also, before I forget, my other fondest memory at Illinois State involves gondolas at Avanti's.

What advice or recommendations would you give current Illinois State sport management students who are looking to break into the sports industry?

You must, must, must, must have practical experience. You must volunteer. You must intern. You must be a graduate assistant. You need to be equally good at writing, designing, taking stats, and computers as well as honing your people skills. Knowing just enough about a lot of different sports is very valuable. Versatility is the backbone of sports information. Go into the industry with the heart of a servant and not to seeking the spotlight and you will have a bigger impact on the daily lives of the people and students around you more than you might ever guess.

Where are they?

Over the past 12 months, several Illinois State sport management graduates have been hired or have been promoted within the sport industry. Below is a list of a few of these individuals listed by their current positions.

- Pat Bodame '10—Sports and activities administrative specialist, Illinois Elementary School Association
- Tracie Brown '08—Coordinator of special programs, Illinois High School Association
- Elliott Charles '07—Athletics Compliance coordinator, Northern Illinois University
- Joe Crane '09—Sales and marketing representative, Fitness 19
- Bryan Goodwin '07—Director of Lake Shore Campus Student Center, Loyola University
- Liz Holcomb '10—Executive assistant to the chief marketing officer, St. Louis Blues
- Tim Kelly '10—Football defensive line coach, Minnesota State–Moorhead
- Stacey Lambert '07—Coordinator of marketing and special events, Illinois High School Association
- Mike Lucas '04—General manager, Windy City Thunderbolts
- Matt Lyons '10—Director of Panther Scholarship Fund, University of Northern Iowa
- Kevin McCarty '10—Director of athletic communications, Angelo State University
- Katherine Menendez '10—Assistant women's basketball coach, Emory University
- Jake Miller '09—Assistant director of athletic marketing, Bradley University
- Chris Myers '07—Recreation program supervisor, Millburn Township (NJ)
- L.B. Nagle '10—Assistant director of athletic marketing, Illinois State University
- Heather Page '10—Coordinator of basketball operations, University of Missouri Women's Basketball
- Mike Schulte '09—Ticket operations manager, Normal CornBelters
- Jill Speer '09—Area director, Special Olympics Illinois Heartland/Area 6.
- Tessi Taylor '04—Assistant athletics director for Compliance, Bradley University
- Clint Warren '07—Assistant professor for sport administration, Eastern Illinois University
- Jordan Watson '07—Director of men's basketball operations, Dartmouth College

2009–2010 student professional practicums:

- Liz Holcomb—Quail Meadows Golf Course
- L.B. Nagle—Illinois State Athletics Development Office
- Brian Nystrom—Normal CornBelters
- Jack Schmitz—Bradley University Athletics Marketing
- Mike Schulte—Peoria Chiefs
- Alex Totura—Normal CornBelters



(left) Chad McEvoy shares a presentation with the athletic marketing directors from the Big Ten Conference. (right) The Illinois State Sport Management program in the *SportsBusiness Journal*.

Illinois State sport management updates

- In March, Chad McEvoy was asked to speak at the Big Ten Conference Marketing Meetings in Chicago. McEvoy presented on how the conference's athletic programs can better form partnerships with Sport Management academic programs on their campuses that are mutually beneficial not only for those athletic and academic units, but most importantly for students. McEvoy has since had continuing dialogue with a couple of Big Ten marketers on the topic. He also served as a judge for the Big Ten Conference athletic marketing awards, reviewing and evaluating submissions of top marketing products from league members in several different awards categories.
- This past January, Illinois State sport management student Scott Krapf was appointed as vice chair of the NCAA Division I National Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) during the NCAA Convention in Atlanta. With the appointment, Krapf will serve as the vice chair in 2010 then move to the chair in 2011. The Division I SAAC reports directly to the NCAA Division I Leadership and Legislative Council and offers input on NCAA legislation regarding student-athlete welfare. Krapf, who was named the Illinois State Doug Collins Male Athlete of the Year and won the Missouri Valley 2009 Cross Country title, has been the Illinois State SAAC president and the school's representative to the Missouri Valley since 2007.
- This past year, Brent Beggs and Chad McEvoy both published coauthored textbooks. A second edition of *Mastering the Job Search Process in Recreation and Leisure Services*, written by Craig Ross, Beggs, and Sarah Young was released in February by Jones & Bartlett. Meanwhile, *Financial Management in the Sport Industry*, authored by Matt Brown, Dan Rascher, Mark Nagel, and McEvoy, was published this summer by Holcomb Hathaway, and will be used in our Fiscal Management course beginning in the fall.
- In the April 26 issue of *Street and Smith's SportsBusiness Journal*, Illinois State University's CISBAH event (see story on page 5) was mentioned in the Faces & Places section. A photo featuring several students and industry guests from the evening and blurb describing the event ran on page 28. Other photos in that week's Faces & Places section included Wayne Gretzky, Derek Jeter, Landon Donovan, Roger Godell, and Jerry Jones.
- While attending the College Sport Research Institute's Scholarly Conference in April, Chad McEvoy was asked to participate in the taping of a forum on sports business and finance. The forum will be broadcast on the Internet later this year and is intended to serve as a pilot for a new syndicated sports business television program.
- This past spring, Illinois State sport management student L.B. Nagle was awarded one of just 15 student travel stipends by the National Association of Collegiate Marketing Administrators to attend their annual convention. Nagle was nominated for the award by Illinois State Athletic Marketing Director Brad Ledford. The grant allowed Nagle to travel to Anaheim, California at the end of June to attend the conference and network with industry professionals.
- While Illinois State sport management classes frequently feature guest speakers, students in Nels Popp's Seminar in Advanced Marketing were able to hear directly from one of the nation's leading sport sales experts, Matt DiFebo, via video conference. The class was the first Illinois State sport management course to utilize the technology, allowing students to interact with DiFebo from his home base in Orlando, Florida where he runs a sport sales consulting business (www.difebocompany.com). Due to the success of the interaction, video conferencing and the use of Skype will likely become more regular occurrences in the sport management curriculum. In the spring,
- Fiscal Management in Sport students heard from Green Bay Packers Board of Director's member Mark Skogen.
- A new addition to the KNR 467 Advanced Topic seminar course in Fall 2009 was the inclusion of a case study competition. Chad McEvoy utilizes case studies extensively in his teaching of this course. Recognizing that many sport management conferences, like the National Sports Forum and the Scholarly Conference on Collegiate Sport, host case competitions where small groups of students from different schools compete to provide the best solution to a practical case study, McEvoy replicated this environment in class last fall. The students in the class were divided into five groups and each group was given two weeks to prepare a solution to a case on the viability of relocating an NHL franchise to Las Vegas. The student groups presented their solutions to a panel of expert judges (alums Tracie Brown and Matt Hawkins, along with McEvoy) and subsequently faced a series of challenging questions from the panel. The group of Pat Bodame, Liz Holcomb, and Katherine Menendez was selected by the panel as the winners of the competition. McEvoy plans on making the competition an annual event along with the Moneyball NBA basketball simulation and the Collective Bargaining Agreement case study competitions.
- The College of Applied Science and Technology, which houses the University's Sport Management Program, introduced a new initiative to recognize alumni who have made outstanding contributions to their field. Each year, CAST will induct leading alums into the Academy of Achievement. To read more about this program or to nominate a deserving individual, visit cast.IllinoisState.edu/events/academy_of_achievement.shtml. While there, check out the new Sport Management website design at kinrec.IllinoisState.edu/graduate/sport_management.

Redbirds host Inaugural Central Illinois Sport Business After Hours (CISBAH) event

By Kelly Morris '10

On March 31, the Illinois State Sport Management Program hosted the first Central Illinois Sport Business After Hours event at the U.S. Cellular Coliseum in downtown Bloomington. The event was open to current students and alums of the University's Sport Management Program, as well as to sport industry professionals statewide, and nearly 80 participants attended.

A panel of alumni started off the evening with a question and answer session addressed to current students. Matt Hawkins '05 (Bloomington-Normal Sport Commission), John Morris '07 (Benedictine University), Bryan Goodwin '07 (Loyola University of Chicago), Stacey Lambert '07 (Illinois High School Association), and Mike Krizman '05 (College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin) made up the panelists and were asked by students for their input on several sport industry topics. They were also asked to give a brief description of their past and current careers, as well as any tips for the students on the best way to find a job in the sport industry.

A networking cocktail-hour followed the alumni panel and allowed individuals to network and reconnect with local professionals from around the area. Attendees including representatives from organizations such as State Farm Sponsorships, Multi-Ad Sports Printing, the Normal CornBelts, the Peoria Rivermen, the Bloomington PrairieThunder, the Peoria Chiefs, the Bloomington Extreme, Illinois State University Athletics, University of Illinois Athletics, University of Illinois-Springfield Athletics, the LPGA State Farm Classic, and WGZ, the ESPN Radio affiliate in Decatur.

The event also featured nationally recognized sports sales and marketing guru, Steve DeLay, from Mandalay Sports Consulting. DeLay is the executive vice president and chief marketing officer for Mandalay Baseball Properties, helping manage some of the most successful minor league baseball teams in the country, including the Dayton Dragons, the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Yankees, and the Frisco RoughRiders. He has also recently helped launch Mandalay Sports Consulting, which specializes in helping minor league teams and college athletic departments improve their marketing, sales, and facility management. DeLay, who previously held sales positions with the New Jersey Nets, Cleveland Indians, and Los Angeles Kings, spoke to guests about current trends in the sport industry, and gave advice on successful sport marketing strategies and tactics, particularly in a tough economic climate.

With so many sport organizations and affiliations within the Central Illinois area, the Illinois State Sport Management Program found it only fitting to host an event where professionals could come together to network and learn about up-and-coming trends that could influence their organizations. The event also provided an opportunity for current students to network and learn more about potential opportunities within the field. Because of the strong turnout and positive feedback from guests, the Sport Management Program will likely continue to look for opportunities to host events that strengthen the quality of their students and program.



ISU Sport Management alumni Matt Hawkins (r) talks to event attendee.



Brent Beggs holds court with Hawkins (l) and ISU development officer Doug Banks (r).



Steve DeLay from Mandalay Sports Consulting addresses the crowd.

Sport Management students invade St. Louis

By Michelle Krischell '11



ISU Sport Management students pose by the ice at the Scottrade Center.

As young professionals with a sport management background prepare to enter the daunting and alluring field of sports, they often question what it takes to make their career goals a reality.

The most valuable tool to utilize when attempting to answer that question lies in those who are currently thriving in the business. We as students were fortunate enough to be presented with an opportunity for that particular tool to be placed right at our fingertips during our sport management graduate program trip to St. Louis. In total, 15 professionals prominent in the St. Louis sporting community came together to provide insight and wisdom for our benefit and future.

Panelists included Mike O'Keefe, vice president/sales of the St. Louis Rams; Eric Stisser, senior vice president of St. Louis Blues; Patty Viverito, senior associate commissioner of the Missouri Valley Conference; Chris Franklin, executive vice president and general manager of the River City Rascals; Bob Lattinville, sport agent with Stinson Morrison Hecker Law Firm;

Tom Keith, associate director of athletics at Saint Louis University; Sarah Baumgartner, executive director of development at the University of Missouri; Kristin Folk-Kaburakis, director of development for the St. Louis Sports Commission; Frank Viverito, president of the St. Louis Sports Commission; Bob Kehm, assistant general manager of Chaifetz Arena; Chris May, director of athletics at Saint Louis University; Mario Moccia, director of athletics at Southern Illinois University; Jeff Shultz, general manager of Mizzou Sports Properties; Scott Stevens, corporate sales and marketing for the St. Louis Cardinals; and Jim Woodcock, senior vice president and partner director for FH Sports Business.

Second year student Matt Lyons and professors Chad McEvoy, Nels Popp, and Brent Beggs coordinated the trip which began with a guided

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Illinois State students gain through graduate assistantship experience

Many students in the graduate sport management program maintain a graduate assistantship (G.A.) position throughout their time at Illinois State. Such positions give students several benefits during their education. The G.A.s earn valuable experience and networking opportunities in the sport industry. They also have their tuition covered by the sponsoring agency as well as earning a stipend which helps them pay the bills. Many of these graduate assistantship positions are provided by the Illinois State Athletics Department, but several external agencies have also taken on students. As part of this year's newsletter, we thought readers could meet some of the G.A.s from this past year.



Jen Banks

Name: Jen Banks

Hometown: Buffalo Grove

G.A. organization and department/position
Bloomington PrairieThunder International Hockey League team; I worked in marketing, sponsorship sales, merchandise, community relations, and game operations

Prior sport industry experience

My undergraduate degree is from the University of Kansas in sports management with a minor in business. I worked for the Chicago Sky (WNBA) and the Chicago Bears (NFL) and I have been a basketball coach and a personal trainer. I was also active in the sports management club at Kansas University.

Career ambitions

I want to work in professional sports. I would love to work for the Chicago Cubs or Chicago Blackhawks although I would not mind working in the minor leagues either. I want to work for a sport that has a long season, such as baseball, hockey, or basketball.

Describe your G.A. position and some of the day-to-day duties

My position was marketing, sponsorship sales, merchandise, community relations, and game operations. I did a lot of everything on a day-to-day basis. I was always helping out wherever I was needed. Some of my duties included contacting potential sponsors for the current or upcoming season, selling merchandise and keeping inventory, setting up databases, being a mentor for interns, helping get everything together for game days, setting up merchandise and other tables on game days, organizing player appearances, and helping out the general manager. I really had my hands on a little bit of everything. My past experience really helped me excel during my graduate assistantship.

Best G.A. experience this past year

I created Hockey for Haiti. I enlisted the help of the Red Cross to help collect money at several of our home games and in our office to go to help those in Haiti. I really enjoy giving back and I feel that when working in the sports industry, it is important to help those in need.

Name: Chris Mallen

Hometown: Gaithersburg, Maryland

G.A. organization and department/position
Illinois State Athletics; Marketing and Promotions

Prior sport industry experience

Sports marketing assistant with North Carolina State University, free-lance work (marketing) with

the NCAA, intern (Marketing/Game Operations) with the Washington Wizards, and a student worker for the Carolina Mudcats.

Career ambitions

To work in marketing in professional sports and one day start my own sports marketing firm.

Describe your G.A. position and some of the day-to-day duties

I assist in marketing and promotions for football, men's and women's basketball, and volleyball. I am in charge of marketing and promotions for baseball. My day usually consists of coordinating distribution of print items with interns, designing flyers, writing game scripts, and managing a game on game days.

Best G.A. experience this past year

Working with everyone during our team's run in the Women's NIT was incredible. The crowds were fantastic for our run in the WNIT and it is always fun to work in postseason play.

Name: Tony Margherio

Hometown: Ladd

G.A. organization and department/position
Bloomington Extreme Indoor Football League team; Game Day coordinator and sales representative

Prior sport industry experience

I've had the opportunity to intern for the Chicago Bandits, the Memphis Redbirds, Tickets.com, and the Normal CornBelters.

Career ambitions

Upon graduation I hope to obtain a position within a ticket operations department for a professional sports organization or a collegiate athletic program.

Describe your G.A. position and some of the day-to-day duties

Daily, I focus on generating new sales for the Extreme, with a primary focus on group outings. On game days I coordinate all on-field promotions. I communicate with the PA, the sound room, the video room, referees, and four game-day interns to ensure that each aspect of the game is run properly.

Best G.A. experience this past year

Not one experience stands out, there is something new each day. Since the Extreme is a smaller operation I am able to get involved with all aspects of the organization, which provides great insight to the available opportunities offered in the sports industry upon graduation.



Chris Mallen



Tony Margherio



(far left) Advanced Sport Marketing students take in a Peoria Chiefs baseball game.

(left) Attendees at the ISU CISBAH event. (l to r) MultiAd Sports Printing Joe Dalfonso, business development manager, and Jim Garner, senior vice president; Kelly Morris, student; Nels Popp, professor; Tiffany Hudson, student; Dan Goodwin, student; Michelle Krischel, student; Mandalay Baseball Properties Steve Delay, executive vice president and chief marketing officer; and State Farm Insurance Todd Fisher, national sponsorships manager.



Alum John Morris talks to student Kelly Morris (no relation) and professor Nels Popp at the CISBAH event.



Kristen Folkl-Kaburakis and Frank Viverito from the St. Louis Sports Commission address ISU students.



Sport Management alum Mike Krizman shares a laugh with ISU Sports Information director Todd Kober and student Kevin McCarty.



Student Jen Godlewski picks up valuable insight at the CISBAH event.



Bloomington PrairieThunder manager of game operations Kyle Anderson listens to Brent Beggs.



Sports agent Bob Lattinville shares a moment with student Mike Brandt.

(right) Student Alex Totura mingles with attendees at the CISBAH event.



(left) Students Jen Godlewski and L.B. Nagle discuss breaking into sports with senior associate commissioner of the Missouri Valley Conference Patty Viverito. (middle) Corey Ansfield and Mike Brandt pose in front of a Brett Hull mural at the Scottrade Center. (right) Missouri Vally Conference commissioner Doug Elgin delivers a keynote address over lunch in St. Louis.

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tour of the Scottrade Center, home of the NHL's St. Louis Blues. Following the tour we reconvened for the first panelist session that featured five professionals. A student moderator led the session and prompted the panelists with a set of questions and members of the audience were also given the opportunity to ask questions. The group then broke for lunch, which was sponsored by the MVC and featured a keynote speaker, the Commissioner of the MVC, Doug Elgin. St. Louis University hosted the second half of our trip, which included two more panelist sessions and a tour of the newly constructed Chaifetz Arena. The two sessions followed the same format as the first and proved to be very insightful. At the conclusion of the trip we departed with an abun-

dance of valuable advice and knowledge about the field of sports and the associated careers. While narrating their personal career paths, each panelist echoed the importance and necessity of experiences. Gaining experience through any outlet is vital to obtaining a career in sports, and internships provide a perfect opportunity to gain experience and sample the different facets of the business side of sports. In addition to providing an individual with field experience, internships also enable people to build relationships and network with professionals. Creating a strong network is absolutely vital in order to progress through the sports industry. The most common piece of advice that was echoed by all of the panelists derived from

passion. The magnitude of passion cannot be ignored, and we were prompted to discover and pursue what we are truly passionate about. If you are passionate about something, it makes everything completely worth it. Transforming a task from work into something you truly love to do. Obtaining a career in sports is not an easy feat, as it embodies the competitive aspect that sports represent. By organizing the trip to St. Louis and giving us the opportunity to hear from a number of successful sporting professionals, the sport management program leaders at Illinois State University gave us a tremendous advantage as we continue our education and embark on our careers.