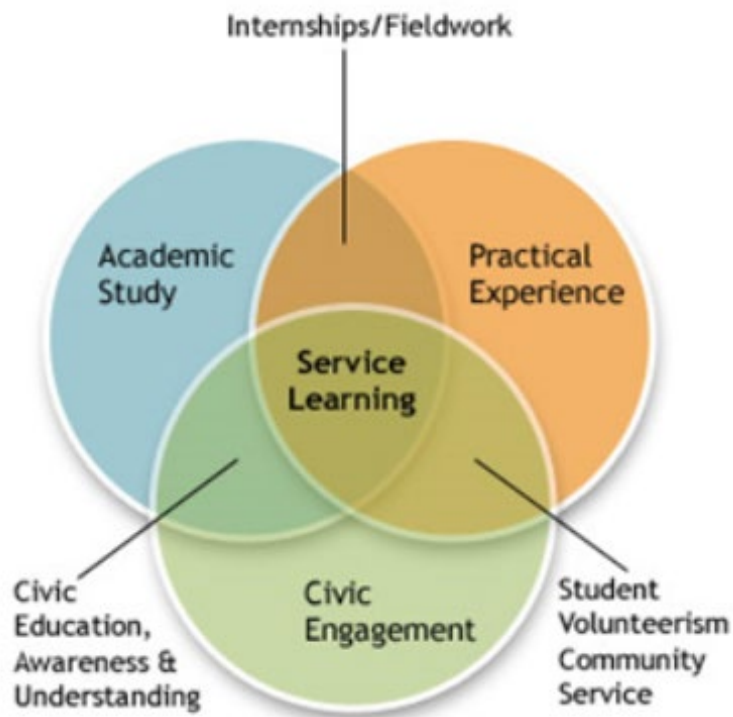


Academic Service Learning Annual Report 2020-2021



Submitted on behalf of the ASL
Steering Committee by:

Kristin Conley, Co-Coordinator

Sarah Hinkley, Co-Coordinator

Tony Baker, Director -Office of
Community Engagement



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Academic Service Learning Mission Statement:

The mission of the Academic Service Learning (ASL) Program at Ferris State University is to promote and support faculty and student engagement in academic service learning to achieve course learning outcomes, foster commitment to service, serve the needs of the community, and enrich the students' personal and academic development.


- **Mission**
Academic Service Learning is a method of teaching that allows students to connect – and thus, learn more deeply – concepts, skills, and other course content with needs and goals of community organizations and agencies. While making this connection, students learn from and provide meaningful service to the community organization or agency.
- **Vision**
We envision a university where students practice the knowledge and skills gained in the classroom in ways that are responsive to community needs and cultivate a life-long commitment to service.

ASL Leadership and Steering Committee Members

The ASL Steering Committee believes in the importance of engaging in academic service learning. Many of the committee members include ASL project in the courses they teach because it is a high-impact teaching practice that supports authentic student learning. Given the changes throughout the 2020-2021 academic year, the steering committee met online to discuss and explore ways to advance ASL at Ferris. This year the ASL committee decided that ASL grants could be opened up to support not only course goals and learning outcomes but also program goals and learning outcomes.

In 2020-2021, the Steering Committee was comprised of the following persons:

Albright, Michele	Coordinator, Career and Volunteer Centers
Axford, Katie	Assistant Professor, Co-Curriculum Coordinator, College of Pharmacy
^ Baker, Tony	Director of Community Engagement
Beistle, Kimberly	Professor, Program, Course and Completion Coordinator in Dental Hygiene, College of Health Professions
Bordeau, Catherine	Advisor, Honors, Retention and Student Success Unit
Bullard, Gail	Associate Professor, Health Administration and Health Information, College of Health Professions



* Conley, Kristin	Assistant Professor, Developmental Curriculum, Retention and Student Success Unit
George, Sharon	Director of Student Academic Affairs, College of Business
Glentz, Tracy	Assistant Professor, Nuclear Medicine Technology, College of Health Professions
Hazelton, Joanie	Assistant Professor, Social Work, College of Arts and Sciences
* Hinkley, Sarah	Professor, College of Optometry
Jadhav, Emmanuel	Assistant Professor, Public Health, College of Health Professions
Jones, Susan	Professor, Marketing, College of Business
Marquard, David	Assistant Professor, English, Literature, and World Languages, College of Arts and Sciences
Rowan, Julie	Instructional Designer, Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, Retention and Student Success Unit

^ASL, EII and PEP Director


* ASL Faculty Coordinator

The ASL Steering Committee members are committed to promoting and enhancing ASL within FSU and its communities. We believe in the power of ASL as a means for community outreach, relationship building, and enhancing student-learning outcomes. We hope that this report informs the University about the many exciting accomplishments of the ASL Program in 2020-2021 despite the small budget and continued restructuring. The work is really just beginning as we continue to develop our work around literacy and chart the future path of ASL.

Summary of Work:

In a time of uncertainty and change, the ASL Program has continued its path forward. In the past several years, ASL has received a significant decrease in funding- like much of the University. However, with this change, the faculty and staff committed to working within the community to provide students with authentic real-life, work-based opportunities to put into practice what they have learned in their courses, continued to engage in academic service learning.

This year's focus was continued support to faculty and staff engaged in ASL projects with additional supports and provisions for those needing it while engaging students in their online teaching/learning platforms. We also engaged in a concentrated effort to inform new faculty and staff about ASL grants and projects by creating several informational video. Finally, we worked on an individual basis to help faculty develop partnerships within the community.




The budget for the 20/21 academic year continued at the significantly reduce rate of \$25,000 for programs including ASL, Political Engagement Project and Economic Inequality Initiative compared to \$60,000 three years prior. This year, even with the COVID-19 pandemic related challenges, ASL grant monies barely supported the received applications- especially in the spring. As we continue to spread the word about the benefits of ASL for the local community and the Ferris community, we are hopeful that the University will continue to support the campus need for this important high-impact teaching practice.

Given that ASL is housed under the Office of Community Engagement, Tony Baker continued with the Concur/reimbursement workload duties and website development. Two faculty co-coordinators led ASL this year, Kristin Conley and Sarah Hinkley. Each received a small stipend to lead the ASL efforts. Kristin and Sarah shared coordination duties for the 2020-2021 academic year. In Kristin and Sarah's roles as Co-Coordinators, they promoted the program, reviewed all faculty grant applications and coordinated communications with applicants/grant recipients, kept a spreadsheet of grants updated and held Steering Committee meetings and took minutes. Tony Baker, Sarah Hinkley, and Kristin Conley each worked with the TDMP students to create the information videos.

Impact

At the heart of the Ferris State's ASL Program lies the experiences of faculty, students, and community partners that intersect where community service meets student learning. These experiences enabled by ASL Curriculum Grants were awarded to faculty through a review process. We are excited to report the attached faculty grants for 2020-21 in Appendix A. The ASL Program funded **11** faculty service-learning projects that were tied directly to course learning outcomes. Although there were fewer grants awarded this year, given the circumstances surrounding the campus closer and COVID -19 restrictions, we supported all the projects that requested funding and we had just enough money to do this given the decrease to our funding. Next year, we may not have enough funding to support all requests. There were multiple instances where faculty members submitted and were funded for more than one project. These projects engaged with **16** community partners and **hundreds** of students and community members. Although ASL funding has decreased significantly in the last few years, a large number of students were impacted by experiences in service learning, community partners were appreciative of the service provided by FSU students and many FSU faculty participated in reported projects. Descriptions of funded ASL projects is found in Appendix C.

Faculty participating in ASL projects regularly report back to ASL leadership on outcomes. Based on feedback from faculty, we are continually amazed at the impact these projects have on student learning, attitude and engagement. We continued not to require the measurement of project outcomes by faculty. This decision was made because of the significant decrease in



resources to support the work necessary to complete this task. Instead, the project summaries reflect project outcomes.

In 2019-2020 we committed to support the literacy needs in the community. Given the temporary changes of 2020-2021 due to COVID -19 and the restrictions imposed about gathering, we still have areas to develop around this initiative. We are still excited about this direction and are committed to grow this area. We are still in the early phases of listening to our community leaders and partners about their needs around literacy. As we gain deeper understanding of the issues, we will work with them to develop strategies that involve ASL.

Community Partners


A critical and indispensable component of the ASL Program are the Community Partners who collaborate with faculty and students in defining and implementing the ASL projects. The 2020-2021 Community Partners are included in the spreadsheet in Appendix C. Some of their testimonies can also be found in the videos linked (Appendix A) within the document. We are grateful for our community partners. These partners often expressed gratitude for the involvement of FSU students and faculty in addressing some of their pressing needs.

Program Awards and Ceremony

The program ceremony did not run again this year due to COVID- 19 closures and gathering restrictions. We are hopeful that in 2021-2022, we can again collaborate with the University's Academic Achievement Award ceremony and host an information program highlighting the year's award recipients and community partners.

Financial Report for 2020-2021:


Significant funding decrease in the last few years for the three programs made our work much more challenging and provided continued opportunities for reorganization and prioritization. We are trying to accomplish much with little funding and working toward creative ways to seek additional revenue to support and enhance our work. See the attached funding spreadsheet in Appendix B.



Looking Ahead to 2021-2022:

At the end of the 2020-2021 academic calendar year, we are once again left with uncertainty about the future of Academic Service Learning. The Office of Community Engagement, where ASL is housed, is once again restructuring. With this uncertainty, it is difficult to plan for 2021-2022. Our hope is that ASL continues to receive support through the University- given its obvious value as a high-impact teaching and learning practice. As we restructure yet again, we are comforted by the continued support of many faculty, staff, and students in the community. We believe there is great opportunity to serve our community and educate our students through ASL in an even greater capacity and we hope that we can work with leadership to expand its impact versus diminishing it with funding losses while honoring the FSU mission of hands-on learning that benefits society.

As our University seeks to build diverse partnerships and strengthen its relationships within the local community, it is our hope that ASL can be an integral component of this effort -given its benefits to both students and the community.



Appendix A

Academic Service Learning Video Projects 2021

In order to raise awareness of the academic service learning happening on our campus and in our community, the ASL program collaborated with the Television & Digital Media Production program to create four informational videos. The videos were designed to inform faculty about the ASL grant opportunity and offer support for creating partnerships or organizing an ASL project. Each video focused on a current ASL project. Kenneth Riegert and Max Dimas, TDMP students, created the videos. Thank you Max and Kenneth!

1st Video- This video focused on informing faculty about the importance of supporting and engaging with the community through ASL partnerships.


ASL recognizes “the importance of the community to the University and the University to the community.”- Dr. Sandy Alspach



FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

Academic Service Learning

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XgNUI-SKUMM>



2nd Video- This video focused on the ASL Dental Hygiene project that supports local students in the community.


When “community partners come to us with a need and we’re able to support that need through our students-it’s a double bonus”. – Dr. Sarah Hinkley



FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

Academic Service Learning

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUaynVUQvIU>



3rd Video- This video focused on the Project Starburst ASL project, which raised hundreds of dollars for this local food pantry.

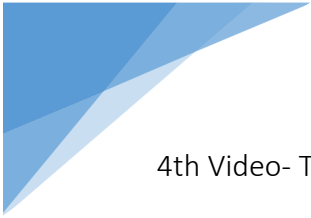
“Ferris is particularly interested in giving students opportunities to not only learn, but learn how to use what they have learned”. – Dr. Stephanie Thomson



FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

Academic Service Learning

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IB0gocwyu8M>




4th Video- This video focused on the Lead Testing ASL Project that provides free lead testing for local children.

NEMSCA came to use and asked if we would “partner with them to get this done for the children”.- Dr. Rhonda Bishop



FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY
Academic Service Learning

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wJEJYK_Nhc



Appendix B

Budget/ Grant Monies Awarded	
2020-2021	
Cost	Faculty
489.52	Bishop
460.98	Kuiper
500	Herron
207.15	Thompson
269.4	Bishop Spring
441.77	Dorey
988.71	Archer Spring and Fall
153.17	Thompson
455.17	Alspach
500 estimate (at this time)	Jones
Estimated Total	4465.87

Fall 2020- Spring 2021
Academic Service Learning Projects
Fall 2021

Project Title: Instructional Design Capstone Projects


Ferris Faculty and Community Partners:

- Nick Kuiper –TDMP 466
- Lauren Moran- Big Rapids Library
- Heidi Kinnally- Big Rapids Artworks
- Amy Greene –Ferris eLearning
- Katie Ponsetto- Historic Charlton Park

ASL Project Overview:

This semester, students will be partnering with four community organizations to create an instructional or educational media project that the community organization will use. The projects include the following:

1. A feature video for Artworks that will showcase the community member's youth art program, and will be shown to investors to increase funding for the organization.
2. A video for Big Rapids Library that will be distributed to new members. The welcome video will showcase the services Big Rapids Public Library provides, discuss how to use your library card, how to reserve materials, etc.
3. Students will create a series of videos, combined into one larger video, to outline ways Ferris eLearning has come together during the pandemic to service faculty and students. It will act as an archival/historical program that can be shown to members of the university, but will also serve enlighten the Ferris community regarding the importance of the Ferris eLearning services.
4. The Historic Charlton Park in Hastings, Michigan will be collaborating with our students to create educational program that will play on video screens within the park, and also be used on YouTube to enhance the park's website. The 19th century village is a place hundreds of people across the region visit to experience what it was like in the 1800's.



Project Title: Lead Screening of NEMSCA Head Start Children

Ferris Faculty and Community Partners:

- Rhonda Bishop- NURS 463
- Angie Peters- NRMSCA Head Start

ASL Project Overview:

This project is an extension of a 2017 collaboration between the School of Nursing Pre-licensure BSN Program and Clinical Laboratory Sciences (CLS) to provide lead screening services to the Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency (NEMCSA) Head Start programs. However, Nursing is now the only program planning, collecting, and processing samples, and will report findings to NEMCSA and the State of Michigan. This project aims to help students apply concepts of Public Health & Community Nursing to a real-life experience while meeting a community need.


Project Title: MOISD & Hope Network Community Dentistry Labs

Ferris Faculty and Community Partners:

- Catherine Archer- DHYG 227
- Patricia Rewa – Hope Network
- Jenny Knopf –MOISD
- Chris Shankel- MOISD

ASL Project Overview:

*Every fall semester, our 2nd year DHYG students rotate through 3, 2-hour labs at each of these sites: Hope Network in Paris, MI & MOISD Education Center. Due to our large class size of DHYG students (n= 40 students every year) ½ the class will visit one of the sites, 3 times in the “fall”, then the student will visit the “other” site in the Spring semester, 3 times. This way, every DHYG student WILL have the same opportunity to work with both the younger (MOISD) & older (Hope Network) **cognitively impaired populations**. Electric (&/or manual) Toothbrushes (TB) are given to students/ consumers (Hope Network) at each of the sites. IF a student &/or consumer were given an electric toothbrush in the fall rotation, we try to give them a TB “replacement” head, during the spring rotation. Not all cognitively impaired students can tolerate the vibration of the electric TB, so some are given a nice manual TB, both times, as well as floss-picks & small tubes of toothpaste (TP). **Our DHYG students help the classroom teachers & aides brush the teeth of the children at MOISD during their 2nd visit & can assess the oral hygiene while doing so.** Most*



participants at both MOISD & Hope Network need help with daily tooth brushing. These Toothbrushes HELP better cleanse the mouths of all whom receive them.

ASL Spring 2021 Projects

Project Title: Environmental Biology and Biology Education Project

Ferris Faculty and Community Partners:

- Scott Herron –BIOL 350-211
- Carrie Weis- Card/Riley Conservation and Wildlife Education Center


ASL Project Overview:

The project will be for students (upper level biology majors and education majors) to research the plants displayed and not displayed in the Michigan Exhibit Room, to under Dr. Herron's guidance to scientifically identify all plants (and fungi) displayed as art/background/habitat for the wildlife animals featured in this Michigan focused room. The goal will be for students to come up with educationally appropriate identification information that can be approved by the Card/Riley Center Director for permanent display. The benefit to the Ferris community and the broader west Michigan users of the Card/Riley Conservation and Wildlife Education Center will be a more conservation and education centered approach where not only the animals are featured, but the plants of Michigan (and beyond) in the displays are featured and identified accurately. It is the intention of the project to also identify key missing botanical specimens and to recommend a list of priority Michigan plants that can be acquired in the future by the Card/Riley Center.

Project Title: Virtual Event Outreach

Ferris Faculty and Community Partners:

- Amy Dorey- HSMG 402-001
- Brett Strohkirch- Coordinator of Residence Life
- Eric Hanson- Big Rapids Nutrition
- Brooke Ankley- Active Minds

- 
- Matt Eickhoff- Virtual Music Trivia Night

ASL Project Overview:

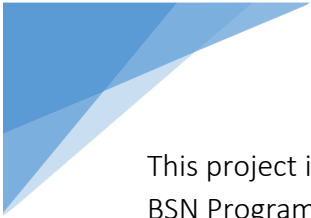
Seniors in HSMG 402 Event Management II course identified the lack of activities available through the university community for students as compared to their first three years at Ferris. The significant increase in mental health decline due to COVID-19 isolation is a community issue at the heart of our campus population. This team of students believe strongly that the traditional facets of events and student engagements lacking due to COVID-19 restrictions have created a lack of opportunity and they believe they can create a resource for our students by using their course knowledge in effective delivery of virtual events. To increase their skills in design and delivery of events in the new virtual format, they requested an opportunity to plan a series of virtual events ranging in value delivery to the campus community. Concerns centered on physical and mental well-being, desire for discovery, and a simple need for safe “fun”. The class was split into groups who discussed the range of topics that could be addressed, and each team decided to address one of the needs identified to provide the campus community with education on physical well-being, mental well-being, and fun discovery through artistic outlets including painting and music. This virtual event series spread out over a two-week delivery time frame will allow Ferris students to learn new tactics for alternative stress relief, make nutrition choices to increase health, and reduce the physical impacts of stress on the immune system. They will also provide students the opportunity to participate in a campus wide shared art project and to challenge their knowledge of music through virtual interactive trivia. The two-week series of educational and fun events will increase student engagement improving the student experience at Ferris and increasing overall mental wellness.

Project Title: Lead Screening of NEMSCA Head Start Children

Ferris Faculty and Community Partners:

- Rhonda Bishop- Nurs 463
- Angie Peters- NRMSCA Head Start

ASL Project Overview:



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ASL Project Overview

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Project Title: Project Starburst Can Drive



Ferris Faculty and Community Partners:

- Stephanie Thomson- COMM 340
- Diane Long (Dir)- Project Starburst
- Renesha Enge (Asst Dir)- Project Starburst

ASL Project Overview:

This project's aim is to promote public advocacy at the local level through raising awareness of our cause and furthering its progress by partnering with a local 501c3 nonprofit organization that is in alignment with our goal of serving those below the poverty line. We have chosen Project Starburst in Mecosta County, held at the United Church of Big Rapids as partner for our initiative, given the current need for food assistance for families in Big Rapids and the surrounding area. Currently they are serving approximately 240 families per month, offering what is most needed to residents living below the poverty line. Specifically, the goals for this project are tailored to the desire for increases in both the amount of donated food items collected and offered services for delivering food items within the region where the project is being implemented.

Community partners and ASL coordinators were invited to COMM 340 student presentations. This provided an authentic audience for students to present their findings and receive feedback.


Project Title: Project Safe Environment

Ferris Faculty and Community Partners:

- Stephanie Thomson- COMM 340
- Josh Pyles- City of Big Rapids

ASL Project Overview:

The goals for this project are to clean and remove trash from all public places. Creating an environment that promotes a clean and safe environment for the visitors. Together with the City of Big Rapids and local community members, we will work to restore the local environments of the Big Rapids by gathering trash and other forms of garbage littering two park locations. We also hope to bring more awareness about the importance of sustaining and protecting the



environment by encouraging the collaboration of the City of Big Rapids, the community, and Ferris State University. In order to meet these goals, we will first need to meet with the City of Big Rapids to determine certain dates when these clean up days will occur. We will also need to determine whether they would be willing to provide any supplies, such as extension arms, gloves, or a location to dispose of the collected litter. To encourage the involvement of other Ferris Student Organizations and community members, we will also create flyers and a sign-up sheet where groups can select days they would like to volunteer. In order to spread awareness about protecting and sustaining our local environments, we will also be posting a series of social media posts and other resources highlighting these topics.

Community partners and ASL coordinators were invited to COMM 340 student presentations. This provided an authentic audience for students to present their findings and receive feedback.

Project Title: Esports Tournament- March 20, 2021


Ferris Faculty and Community Partners:

- Sandy Alspach, COMM 389, COMM 489;
- RSO- Sports Careers
- Area 5 Special Olympics-Michigan

ASL Project Overview:

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021 required a re-inventing of the team projects sponsored by Sports Careers RSO and conducted by the Sports Communication courses (COMM 389 Sports Communication and COMM 489 Seminar in Sports Communication). In Spring 2020, the students were able to conduct the “Red Out the Wink and Rink” fund-raiser for Women’s Heart Health (Spectrum Foundation) in February, before the national shutdown. The branding red t-shirt “uniforms” purchased with an ASL grant were vividly evident in the Sports Complex at that event, which raised \$1100 for the Cardio-Pulmonary Rehab Unit at Spectrum Big Rapids Hospital. But the signature “Heart to Heart Hand in Hand” Basketball game to benefit Area 5 Special Olympics Michigan scheduled for April had to be canceled.

The Sports Careers RSO planned and executed a fully online Esports Tournament in Fall 2020 as an alternative to their Welcome (Back) to Ferris Kickball Tournament. This event had limited participation, but the students were confident that they could improve with the support of the




Sports Communication classes. So, we chose an Esports Tournament as the team project for Spring 2021 in place of the “Red Out” and “Heart to Heart” events, with Special Olympics as the designated beneficiary.

We scheduled the Tournament for March 20 and began forming teams in late January. The course project design was that four teams of students from the combined COMM 389/489 classes would plan, market, and execute a one-day fully online Esports Tournament in which contestants would vie for \$25 gift cards in four online games: Madden21 (separate brackets for PS and Xbox), NBA2K21, FIFA, and Rocket League. These games were chosen because they were clearly sports games or sports-related games rather than the more popular and competitive games like Call of Duty or Fortnite which tend to be “shooter” or war games. Originally the instructional design included MLB21 but the students (with advice from consultant Jonathon Eaton who coaches the Ferris Esports Club teams) replaced that baseball game with Rocket League which is more popular and creates a fantasy game in which contestants drive cars to ‘kick’ a super-sized soccer ball into a goal.

We reached out to Special Olympics Michigan to invite their participation. While we forged a new partnership with SOMI’s Nick Picano who coordinates Esport competitions for SO athletes across the state, this collaboration produced several challenges that delayed marketing. First, we wanted to charge a registration fee to raise funds for Area 5 SOMI, but we did not want to charge the SOMI athletes to participate. One student volunteered to manage the online registration site and worked with the treasurer of Sports Careers RSO to channel registration fees through PayPal into the club’s Huntington Bank account. She built a separate registration site for the SOMI athletes. She created a QR code to link to the registration site that could be put on advertising flyers.

We wanted to provide an opportunity for those who saw the flyer but who did not want to play in the games to donate to Area 5. Pat Rosales, Director of Area 5, got permission from SOMI to open a PayPal link for donations. We delayed launching our marketing campaigns for the Tournament until that permission was received.

One student volunteered to design the t-shirt “uniforms” for the class teams to wear in advertising the event and on Tournament day. She researched and negotiated a contract with



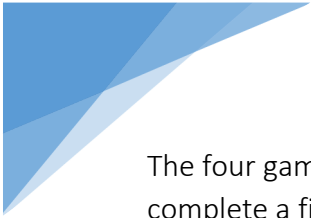
Sport Tees in Saginaw (close to her home) to provide the shirts. However, we lost time in applying for the ASL grant to pay for the shirts until she completed her research and negotiations, and we had a firm price to calculate our grant request. We were also unable to receive the shirts until after the Tournament date, so the plan to wear the shirts in marketing and on “game day” was not accomplished. However, the shirts were handed out to students on campus and mailed to students off-campus as mementos of their participation in this benefit activity. This mailing produced an extra expense which was absorbed by the Sports Communication program budget. (see attached photo)

The four teams included students in COMM 389 Sports Communication and students in COMM 489 Seminar in Sports Communication. The project design involved several class assignments. Students in both classes wrote 100-word “bids” arguing for the specific online game they wanted to work. Students in COMM 389 were invited to self-nominate to “captain” the team for additional points.

The COMM 489 class included four students who had participated in the “Red Out” event in February 2020 and three students who were concurrently enrolled in COMM 389 and had no previous event management experience. So, the project design for COMM 489 focused on mentoring: an “experienced” student was paired with an “inexperienced” student to advise them on event team leadership strategies. The three “inexperienced” students were assigned to “captain” a team of students in COMM 389 to enact those team leadership strategies.

After the bids were submitted, it became clear that the teams would not be evenly distributed. So, the Madden21 team of eight students in COMM 389 were led by co-captains who were also in COMM 489. These two students were challenged to work together as partners, to lead six other classmates, and to participate as “mentees” with a “mentor” in the leadership project in COMM 489.

While the course designs looked clear on paper, it became obvious in the final reports from the COMM 489 students that the students performing as both “captain” and “mentee” struggled to differentiate the objectives of the COMM 389 event management project from the COMM 489 mentorship project.




The four game teams were assigned to design a Marketing Plan, make two Progress Reports, and complete a final report of the project that was presented both as a PowerPoint-supported oral report with participation by each member of the team and as a formal written report. The “wordsmith” who designed the team’s PowerPoint program and edited it for consistency earned extra points. The “wordsmith” who compiled the team members’ individual reports into the final team report earned extra points. The team captains were responsible for submitting the Marketing Plan and Progress Reports on behalf of the team, with all team members listed on the reports given equal credit. The co-captains of the Madden 21 team came to me following the submission of the Marketing Plan to report that they had a non-participating team member. We confirmed that only participating members’ names should be listed on reports, and I reached out (repeatedly) to the non-participating student to engage him in the project. I view this case as unique in my experience with this course and possibly exacerbated by the virtual learning experience imposed by COVID concerns.

Perhaps as a result of the case of the non-participating team member, the co-captains of the Madden21 team appeared to fall into a “groupthink” mindset, trusting only each other to get tasks accomplished, which resulted in a deterioration of the cohesiveness of their team. While all participating members were listed on the earlier reports, only the co-captains’ names were included on the final written report. I intervened and negotiated with the team so that the rest of the team were permitted to file separate reports of their activity on the project. This problem provided a useful learning experience for both the co-captains and the team members.

The students in COMM 489 completed several assignments associated with the project. They set goals for the mentorship, researched coaching strategies, reflected on the results of applying those strategies with their partner, and reported the entire project experience as the main topic of their Senior Presentation for this program capstone course.

In terms of the event itself, the project produced several positive outcomes while falling short of expectations for both the students and me. First, there were no participants in the FIFA game, so that team’s report reflected on what they learned from “failure.” Second, the only participants in the Rocket League game were Special Olympics athletes (who played “for free”), so there was no income from which to draw the promised “reward” gift card or to donate to Area 5 SOMI. The gift card for the winner was donated by the president of Sports Careers RSO, who was a member of the COMM 389 class and worked as the “athletic director” for the entire project, coordinating



class and club members and promoting the event by holding a “last minute registration” table in the University Center on the Thursday and Friday before the Tournament. Third, there was one registrant in the NBA2K21 game, so his brother who was a COMM 389 class member played him “for fun” without a gift card prize. Finally, there were 4 registered players and 3 SOMI athletes in the Madden21 game. So, the Madden team gave 2 \$20 gift cards, one for each platform bracket, as “rewards”. To even the brackets, the “AD” joined the Madden game.

The final project reports were consistent in the students’ concern that there was “not enough time” provided in the classes to achieve the participation goal for the event. I have referenced timing issues earlier in this report; some of which were externally influenced, but some of which were learning experiences for students. Another learning experience was the students’ appreciation for the challenges in marketing an event to a niche audience; their Marketing Plans were optimistic both in counting on their personal social media outreach strategies and the price point they had set for the registration fee.

One of the positive outcomes of the event was that the donation site produced \$260 in direct donations to Area 5 SOMI for the day. Another positive outcome was the establishment of the relationship with Special Olympics MI for future Esports activities, as evidenced by the SOMI athletes who participated in the Tournament. This activity justified the “21” t-shirt design which advertises Sports Communication and Special Olympics “United” on the front and promotes the theme of inclusion embraced by Sports Careers RSO’s history of unified activities with Area 5 SOMI over the last eight years.

Although this project was essentially an effort to compensate for a unique situation produced by a global pandemic and still achieve the course outcome for a team experience in managing a sports event, both the students in Sports Careers RSO and the students in the two Sports Communication classes encouraged me to consider including a similar activity in next year’s Spring courses. Of course, I am hopeful that Spring 2022 will see a return to the “Red Out” and the “Heart to Heart” events we have enjoyed hosting, and learning from, in the past. But I will be working with Sports Careers RSO again in the Fall to see how we can grow our skills in engaging in Esports activities with the vision that when the new Virtual Learning Center opens for business with its Esports “Arena”, we will be ready to host more robust fund-raising activities with and for our Area 5 Special Olympics community partners.