



Could using the sport Flutie effect phenomenon revitalize commencements in higher education?

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Abstract

The literature reviewed will identify and analyze some of the historical accounts from past and present authors on graduation commencements that are found in the traditional higher education culture in the United States and globally. Some of those graduation commencements that will be explored are: graduation ceremonies, academic regalia, and the academic solidarity within the higher education community. This investigation will introduce the sport marketing phenomenon the “Flutie Effect” to explore integrating the advertising of sport heroics into revitalizing higher education academic graduation commencement.

Keywords: higher education, graduation, Flutie effect, commencement

1. Introduction

Today more than every higher education institutions need to identify the rationale used in showcasing our academic graduation commencements. The literature that will be reviewed will define the value of these graduation commencements and their importance to higher education institution. Historically graduation commencements have established value not only to the institution but to the students who choose to participate in them (Lucas, 1994) [6]. This connection with consideration of how the Flutie Effect advertises specific sport heroics could contribute to revitalizing today’s graduation commencements.

Graduation commencements can be one of the most exciting part of many students’ lives in higher education. The thought of putting on a thick robe, turning the tassel, throwing the caps in the air, screaming at the top of your lungs, and laughing with your peers is a moment many higher education administrators take for granted. Graduation is a special day that celebrates the accomplishments of an achievable student (Atugonza, 2010; Thrift, 2011) [1]. Graduation’s commencements have been studied throughout history, whether it be within the United States or other countries and various cultures. In recent studies, graduation still varies substantially from place to place, but each graduation tends to have the same diagram and meaning. (Lucas, 1994; Atugonza, 2010; Thrift, 2011) [6, 1].

2. History and Examination of Academic Rites, and Ritual

The examination of the graduation commencement of the past will show us the rationale that higher education institutions still share today. In examination of academic graduation commencements throughout history it is an event that is to be viewed and celebrated (Atugonza, 2010; Lucas, 1994; Magolda, 2003; Thrift, 2011) [1, 6]. The commencement rite of passage in higher education is one of those life events that celebrate the exiting of a student who have obtained their academic degrees. This academic ritual should be recognized

as one of the premier events in higher education that recognizes a student’s education achievements. Lucas (1994) [6] advocated in his historical review during his time that graduation rites at modern universities have lost sight of the importance of commencement graduation rituals in promoting recruitment and retention at their institutions (Lucas, 1994; Magolda, 2003; Thrift, 2011) [6]. Some would agree that this is the case still today.

In general, history has regarded higher education commencement events past and present favorably. Graduation commencement has the traditional processional, welcome form dignitaries, commencement address, conferring of all degrees, and the recessional parade (Magolda, 2003). The graduation ceremony has been called the Encaenia. Oxford is the oldest university in the English-speaking world, with a history of 800 years. For 800 years administrators, faculty and students have maintained this tradition. Chen (1999) who observed Oxford’s commencement wrote that it produces a sense of history, nobility, and they still use Latin throughout the ceremonies.

Academic regalia is traditional clothing worn specifically in higher education rites and rituals. The wearing of the cape (Cappa clausa) in 1222 represented the academic community and the clergy (faculty) of that era (Kerr, 2008) [5]. Oxford and Cambridge the cape was abandoned in favor of the gown that had long sleeves and opened in front. The modern version of academic regalia at American higher education institutions faculty members can wear their alma mater regalia at the commencement ceremonies. The processions can look very colorful and can be seen as a sash over the traditional gown (Kerr, 2008; Martin, 2005) [5, 8].

Higher education institutions need to maintain traditional academic visibility of the university as well as upholding significance of academic rites and rituals. The tradition began with medieval university did provide a distinct values system, which was called scholasticism. These scholars conveyed the importance of maintaining academic integrity to the university

(Scott, 2004) ^[4]. During the 1800 and through the 1900 century the universities were lagging behind promoting academic convention, rites, and rituals. Academic graduation rituals that are shared by higher education institutions have historical significance in establishing the intellectual visibility of a university. Higher education's institutions need to maintain those values of the past and be able to communicate those values to today's students (Silver, 2003; Scott, 2004) ^[4]. Higher education leaders need to consider promoting the values of academic commencements to the community. Historically and presently, it is not all about practicing the rituals without regard for their value (Cohen, 1998; Silver, 2003; Scott, 2004; Thrift, 2011) ^[3, 4].

3. Flutie Effect Sport Advertising Phenomenon

Higher education institutions strive for success whether that involve academics, student comradery, campus atmosphere, attendance, and athletics. In 1984, Boston College football appeared to have the best sport marketing campaign and it focused on a dramatic play in a football game. Boston College's quarterback, Doug Flutie threw a touchdown pass to beat the University of Miami. This dramatic play and sport success put Boston College on the map for new student admission recruits. This has become known as the Flutie Effect (Chung, 2013; Fleming, 2014; Silverthorne, 2013). Higher education marketing experts have acknowledged the Flutie Effect's ability to transfer a successful collegiate athletic program into a hot ticket for new student admissions (Chung, 2013; Fleming, 2014; Silverthorne, 2013). Ever since higher education administrators have recognized the power of the Flutie Effect's ability to transfer successful collegiate athletic programs into increased admissions. Other universities such as Georgetown and Northwestern have chaptalized on the Flutie Effect advertising their sport basketball successes that had a spillover effects into academics (Chung, 2013; Silverthorne, 2013). The research of Chung (2013) focused on mass media advertising through their athletic programs and the findings were that universities applications for admissions increased by 17.7 percent and the university could become more academically selective because of their athletic success.

4. Results & Discussion

Flutie Effect Consideration to Revitalize Academic Commencement

The higher education institution's commencement ceremonies are important in establishing a sense of community and have proven to be durable from the past to present (Magolda, 2003; Silver, 2003; Thrift, 2011). The Intellectual visibility of today's universities is threatened by the failure of institutions to maintain the values of academic life. In addition, there is a reduced understanding of the importance of the academic accomplishments of the students and the achievement of graduating from their universities (Magolda, 2003; Silver, 2003; Thrift, 2011). Higher education institutions need to monitor and maintain the scholarship surrounding academic graduation commencement to stay connected with students who successful go through the education process of obtaining a degree. The academic commencements help bridge that connection (Magolda, 2003; Silver, 2003; Thrift, 2011).

A criticism of higher education administrators is that they

have not been proactive enough to establish community within the institution itself and around the institution in protecting the value of academic commencements ceremonies. With the move from a privilege few going to college to mass production there is a strong need not to diminish the values establish with past academic convention, rites, and rituals (Scott, 2003; Silver, 2003). The criticism of this challenge is directly linked to defining and maintaining scholarship objectives. The future cannot be so consumed with mass production system and that we forget to maintain these important academic commencement ceremonies (Atugonza, 2010; Thrift, 2011) ^[1].

Sport marketing strategies such as the Flutie Effect could highlight and have an impact on higher education graduation commencements. Higher Education institutions should make their graduation commencement ceremonies a dynamic power play in the lives of their students. On field heroics that created the sensation Flutie Effect could be beneficial to schools by showcasing the academic heroics in their higher education institutions (Atugonza, 2010; Chung, 2013; Fleming, 2014; Silverthorne, 2013) ^[1]. Higher education institution commencement rites and rituals should include more opportunities to showcase academic heroics for their students. The University of New Mexico showcases the accomplishments of Hispanic students in a Raza ceremony prior to the overall university's commencement (2018). The University of Texas A & M at Commerce (2018) continues the concept of having pre ceremonies for the LGBTQ students called the Lavendar ceremony and for their black students that have an Ujima ceremony. These pre-ceremonies are not taking the place of the overall university's commencement ceremonies but to encourage students to participate in the main commencement. Graduation is a significant rite of passage that needs to be celebrated and show cased just like the highlighted sport heroics that we see in the Flutie Effect (Atugonza, 2010; Chung, 2013) ^[1]. Providing more opportunities for students to participate in graduation commencement ceremonies could contribute to increase enrollment and building a stronger student community at higher education institutions.

4. References

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