

Dave O'Brien Leadership Award Recipients (2014-2022)



Kevin Murray

2014 Co-Recipient (Undergraduate)

Major: B.S. in Sport Management

Class Year: 2015

Grad School: M.S. in Education Policy at University of Pennsylvania (Class of 2018); Current MBA Candidate at Drexel University's LeBow College of Business (expected 2023)

Current Employment: Associate Director for Undergraduate Admissions at Drexel University

Activities at Drexel: Undergraduate Student Government Association, former president of Sports Management Student Union, Head Resident Assistant, Drexel Residential Living Office, Researcher for Drexel Sport Management Department, External Relations Assistant, Drexel U Athletics

How has receiving the O'Brien Leadership Award impacted you while you were at Drexel and/or post-graduation?

Receiving the O'Brien Leadership Award was an incredible honor and affirmation to my years of appreciation of Professor O'Brien's care for his students, passion for learning and teaching, and desire to lead others. Professor O'Brien's stewardship of young people that loved sports into careers in that industry combined with his compassionate, caring, and metered demeanor set him apart from other faculty in our department and across the University. While I never had the chance to work with Professor O'Brien in a professional setting, his style of communication and passion for teaching have stayed with me all of these years and throughout my career in education.

Why did you choose Drexel, specifically Sport Management/Sport Business?

I chose Drexel Sport Management because I loved having the ability to learn about the sport industry alongside students from all over the world and from faculty with a variety of industry experiences and knowledge bases. There was something about the camaraderie of the program, faculty, and students in SMT that instantly drew me to the program and made it clear that it was a great place for me. I was looking for a large, urban university environment, but also really valued deeper connections with fellow students and faculty, and SMT was the perfect combination of those traits.

What is your favorite class that you took?

My favorite class during my undergraduate years at Drexel was Leadership in Sport & Society. Something so important about a passion-based degree like Sport Management is that you get to learn how to connect your love of an industry with the academic history and professional relevancy of that industry. Seeing sport through the lens of the great leaders throughout the years

and through its impact on the greater society was so enlightening and reaffirming. It's easy to think about sport as a game or season at a time, but the holistic and wide-ranging impacts of the industry help to contextualize the importance of the work that sport leaders do.

What is your favorite memory of your time at Drexel?

There are so many, but a general trend that stands out to me from my time in undergrad is volunteering at open houses and admitted student days for prospective students. I understood then the value of hearing the student experience when making a college decision, as listening to current students speak when I was making my decision was hugely important to me. It was always such an honor and privilege to be invited to speak with prospective students and their families to help them better understand Drexel and Sport Management from the student perspective. This also allowed me to build strong relationships with our faculty and staff supporting those events, which was another major reason why I chose Drexel in the first place. Now, on our admissions team, I work so hard to make sure that events like that run smoothly so other students can get the same information and experience they need out of being on our campus to make the right college decision for them.

What does the award mean to you?

This award is an incredible honor; to be recognized by the Drexel sport management faculty and staff is something that I will always treasure. I feel so lucky to have known and learned from Professor O'Brien; the happenstance of my entering college at time where the Sport Management program was growing and hitting its stride as a standalone unit meant that I could be a part of something special. It still feels that way to me today, even seven years later. I want to thank the O'Brien family for sharing Dave with Drexel; the impacts he had on individual students lives and careers is not measurable by career placement or salary levels, but instead by their appreciation for him, his wisdom, guidance, and time, and the fond memories that we share.



Kevin Rossi

2014 Co-Recipient (Undergraduate)

Major: B.S. in Sport Management; **Minors:** Communications, Business Administration

Class Year: 2014

Grad School: M.S. in Communication, Culture & Media (Class of 2016)

Current Employment: Digital Content Manager at Museum of the American Revolution

Activities: Sport Management Student Union, worked part-time for NBCSportsPhilly.com

How has receiving the O'Brien Leadership Award impacted you while you were at Drexel and/or post-graduation?

Receiving the O'Brien Leadership Award was a fulfilling culmination of all the hard work I put into my college courses and beyond. The recognition gave me the confidence to know that I belonged in the sports industry and that my work ethic could lead me wherever I chose to go next in my career.

What does the award mean to you?

Receiving the O'Brien Leadership Award truly meant a lot to me because I had the opportunity to take Dave's classes while I was a student at Drexel. Dave's classes were never easy - trust me, you never forget those blue book essay exams - but they challenged me in an exciting way to look at issues within the sports industry in a new light and to broaden my education outside of sports alone. It was an honor to receive an award bearing the name of a professor who really had a positive impact on my college education and whose name is synonymous with integrity and honesty in college athletics.

Why did you choose Drexel, specifically Sport Management/Sport Business?

The combination of classroom and real-world experience at Drexel really could not be beat. I fell in love with the can-do Drexel attitude from the moment I started looking at schools and knew right away that Drexel was where I would be. I really appreciated how the Sport Management faculty brought their industry experience into the classroom and were extremely generous with opening their industry networks to us at every turn. (Short aside: At an accepted students' day, Dave ran a mock classroom discussion for the prospective students and their family members. It blew my dad and I away - we still talk about it to this day, and that was more than a dozen years ago. Dave's fair, principled thought-process was on full display, and I knew I'd be in good hands.)

What is your favorite memory of your time at Drexel?

My favorite Drexel memory is less of a tangible moment and more of what Drexel has come to represent to me. Drexel represents a place where I grew up and learned more about myself than I could ever imagine. It's a place of comfort for me. I reconnected with my now-wife at Drexel. I began my post-college career at Drexel in the athletics department. I met some of my best friends at Drexel.



Hayley Zedeck

2015 Recipient

Major: B.S. in Sport Management, **Minors:** TV Production, Communications, Business Administration

Class Year: 2015

Current Employment: Producer at Tupelo Honey (Indianapolis)

Extracurriculars: Alpha Sigma Alpha Sorority, Sport Management Student Union

Testimonial

I feel so lucky to have known and learned from Dave O'Brien during my time at Drexel, something I realize now was a true luxury for students in this industry. I cherished every opportunity to enroll in one of his classes. Unlike other professors I had throughout college, he had the unique ability to challenge me to think critically, analyze the subject matter, and understand sports business & law beneath the surface. Meeting him during a visit to Drexel while I was in high school, I recall an sample lecture he gave to other prospective students and their parents as well. He discussed the controversial topics of revenue generation in college athletics and its potential impact on student athletes. That discussion profoundly impacted me (and my parents) that day and was a defining reason that I chose to enroll at Drexel. He had the innate ability to capture our attention and encourage us to see things from a different perspective. As impactful as he was as an instructor, he was an even better human being. He went out of his way many times to write letters of recommendation, provide sound advice, and assist me in achieving my goals while in college and beyond. It was a true honor to earn this award in 2015 and forever be associated with Dave O'Brien.



Ezekiel Goldsmith

2021 Recipient

Major: B.S. in Sport Management, **Minor:** Business Administration

Class Year: 2022

Employment: Operations & Recruiting Associate at TurnkeyZRG

Extracurricular Activities: Former president of Drexel Sports Business Association, Creative Director and @DrexelSBIZ social media accounts

How has receiving the O'Brien Leadership Award impacted you while you were at Drexel and/or post-graduation?

Receiving the O'Brien Leadership Award empowered me to expand my leadership capabilities, eventually being elected as the President of the Drexel Sport Business Association. I was able to use the scholarship to help fund the completion of my undergraduate degree. The O'Brien Leadership Award was a capstone to my Drexel career and being recognized as a community leader played a large part in finding a post-graduate opportunity.

Why did you choose Drexel, specifically Sport Management/Sport Business?

I chose Drexel University for two reasons. First, it gave me the immediate chance to dive head-first into a career in sports, utilizing the co-op program to build the foundation for my career. Second, the Sport Business department couldn't have been more empowering and supportive. I'm incredibly grateful for the mentors I've met and the relationships I've built through the department.

What is your favorite class that you took?

Sport Media Relations with Dr. Staurowsky. Communication is critical and this class taught me how to represent myself and my story to the fullest extent.

What is your favorite memory of your time at Drexel?

My favorite memory at Drexel was leading Drexel's first ever LGBTQ+ Issues in Sport Conference. As the first openly gay President of the Drexel Sport Business Association, it was fantastic to share perspectives from top sport industry leaders representing the LGBTQ+ community. I was blown away by the engagement and commitment to equitable solutions that the conference received. I appreciate Drexel for providing the LGBTQ+ community in sports a platform to create meaningful change.

What does the award mean to you?

The O'Brien Leadership award made me immensely proud to be a Dragon and have the recognition of the Drexel Sport Business community. It was an incredible feeling to know that my work over the last five years had made a meaningful impact. Receiving this award affirmed the importance of giving back to my community and creating valuable opportunities that empower others.



Valentina (Val) Serna Londono

2022 Co-Recipient (Undergraduate)

Major: Sports Business; **Co-majors:** Organizational Management

Minor: Graphic Design

Class Year: 2023

Activities at Drexel: Facility Supervisor at Drexel Rec Center, Golf Club Member, Newman Catholic Center

Dear O'Brien family, participants, donors, volunteers, and event staff,

I was born in Milan, Italy, lived there for 7 years, moved to Bogota, Colombia lived there for 11 years, and came almost three years ago to Philadelphia to pursue my career. Having this said, I like to think of myself as a citizen of the world. This has allowed me to know, understand and live through different cultures and realities that sometimes seem to be too far away from each other.

Nonetheless, there is something that with the years, I have realized that stays the same in each country; and that is the power and importance of sports, which further leads to be the main reason why I chose my major. In fact, I fully believe in the importance of sports as one of the backbones of our society. I am convinced that sports are the means to build a more peaceful world, exalting universal ethical principles and taking down social barriers. Working for sports, aligns with my desire of being part of a project that leaves a legacy for future generations, brings different cultures together, and acclaims the talent and dedication of athletes.

Many would say that a college degree is the right path to success, but for me, pursuing my degree in Sport Business at Drexel, feels like the right path to accomplish my dream. However, as mentioned before, there are several challenges that as an international student me and my family must overcome. Many of them go unnoticed, but the financial effort, the sacrifice of being away from all my loved ones, the cultural change and the multiple restrictions related to my student-visa status are still there, and sometimes still feel like too much to handle.

This award is an unbelievable support that not only had a tangible effect in the completion of my academic career at Drexel, but that was a big motivating factor for me to keep working hard, and to keep overcoming those challenges. Therefore, I want to thank one more time, everybody that made this possible because with this award, you are certainly helping a citizen of the world with many dreams, to achieve every one of them in a country that is starting to feel like home.

Best,

Val



Laurelle Holley

2016 Recipient

Major: B.S. in Sport Management

Class Year: 2016

Current Employment: Talent & Guest Management at Katalyst Productions (Philadelphia)

Activities at Drexel: Phi Sigma Pi National Honor Fraternity, Relay for Life, Colleges Against Cancer, Campus Activities Board, Late Night Series



Lindrit Shkodra, Esq.

2017 Recipient

Major: B.S. in Sport Management

Class Year: 2017

Grad School: J.D., Louisiana State University, Class of 2021

Major: B.S. Sport Management

Grad School: J.D. Louisiana State University Law

Class Year: 2017

Current Employment: Co-Founder, LA & A Cleaning Service

Activities at Drexel: DAC Pack, Intramural Basketball, Sport Management Student Union



Carter Caplan

2018 Recipient

Major: Sport Management, **Minors:** Business Administration, Sports Coaching Leadership

Class Year: 2020

Current Employment: Director of Basketball Operations, Arizona State University (Tempe)



Chris Markowitz

2019 Recipient

Major: B.S. Sport Management, **Minors:** Communications, TV Production

Class Year: 2019

Current Employment: Associate Producer at Play by Play Productions, Freelance Play-by-Play announcer (various)

Activities: Sport Editor at *The Triangle*, Theta Chi Fraternity, Ultimate Frisbee



Kyle Kaempf

2020 Recipient

Major: B.S. in Business Administration; **Co-majors:** Sport Business, Marketing; **Minor:** Entrepreneurship

Class Year: 2021

Current Employment: Marketing Assistant at Art Sphere, Inc. (Philadelphia)

Activities at Drexel: Drexel Men's Club Soccer, Lindy Center for Civic Engagement



Megan Trivelpiece

2022 Co-Recipient (Graduate)

Major: B.S. Middle Level Math and English Education, **Minor:** Sport Coaching Leadership

Class Year: 2021

Grad Degree: M.S. in Sport Business (Drexel), Class of 2022

Activities at Drexel: Student Athlete: Softball, Kappa Delta Pi Education Honor Society, Future Educators of Drexel, Volunteer at MANNA