



Ohio State HCS News

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PGM major teaches beyond the links



Junior Aaron Bell dreams of becoming a golf resort manager so he chose OSU's Professional Golf Management program.

To earn the College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences newest degree, students are required to have something none of their peers need to graduate a 10 or less golf handicap.

But having skills on and around the greens is only the tip of the tee for those in the [Professional Golf Management Program](#) major, a four-and-a-half to five-year plan that requires students to work 16 to 20 months of hands-on internships. It is a truly interdisciplinary major with courses offered through [CFAES](#), [Fisher College of Business](#) and the [College of Education and Human Ecology](#).

"Requiring the handicap shows us students have the golf aptitude to pass the PGA's Playing Ability Test," said **Ray Miller**, director of the PGM major. "That led people to envision this as an athletic degree, but it really isn't."

Students learn how to operate a golf course or resort from top to bottom, studying accounting, food and beverage management, event planning, turfgrass science, marketing, finance, inventory control and more - all while honing their golf skills and teaching expertise.

The PGM program has proven successful in 18 other institutions around the country, including its original launch in 1975 at Ferris State in Big Rapids, Mich. In fact, some students have been offered jobs before graduating because of how well the programs have been designed. The Professional Golfers' Association of America accredits the programs and requires students to become Class A PGA professionals after graduation. Ohio State expects to earn its designation by autumn quarter.

"I knew before coming to OSU that I wanted to work in golf," said junior **Aaron Bell**, "and PGM directly correlates with what I want to do for a living. If I had a business degree, I would only have a small background for the golf industry. It would be like a doctor working as a vet."

What Bell will have after graduation is a solid foundation for entry into a \$62 billion business, Miller says. About \$4.4 billion of that is produced in Ohio, according to a PGA study. Miller said the starting median salary for someone going through a PGM program is about \$50,000 and can eventually reach six figures.

Bell plans to be an assistant pro and later become a head pro. His dream job, however, is becoming a general manager of a resort or working for Nike Golf or Titleist.

Miller said there is no shortage of individuals and businesses that have supported the program with internships. In fact, Miller said the biggest response he gets when introducing the program is "What took OSU so long?"

Ohio State's PGM program, which has 60 students enrolled, differs from other schools because of its interdisciplinary approach.

"Other schools, especially the smaller ones, are very 'golfcentric,'" Miller said. "Even though students might learn human resource management or restaurant management, their programs are really focused on the golf part of that. Our students here, even if they decide to get out of golf, will have a broad enough background to do other things in life."

Dave Gardner, associate professor of horticulture and crop science and a turfgrass specialist, started the process of establishing a PGM major in 2001. Even though the program will be the newest nationally, Miller doesn't think it will be long before it is the most respected.

"We want to rank right at the top," he said. "I think because of all these other things we have here - the reputation of Ohio State, a golf legacy that includes Jack Nicklaus and support of the industry - there's no doubt we can be the No. 1 program in the country."

Teeing up the PGM major

- Three colleges, including the College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Fisher College of Business and the College of Education and Human Ecology, join the athletic department in contributions to the PGM major.
- 60 students are enrolled with 300 slots available.
- Students are required to have a 10 handicap or less to get into the program.
- The Professional Golfers' Association of America accredits every PGM program. There are 19 in the country.
- Students go beyond golf, learning hospitality, business, marketing and management as part of the degree program.

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