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## **Sports-leadership programs kick off**

**By Nick Perry**

*Seattle Times staff reporter*

Seattleites who are feeling inspired to ditch their day jobs to run a football team or direct college athletics can start hitting the books.

While the pain of a Super Bowl loss may be testing the resolve of some fans, the past few weeks also have revealed the region's deep interest and passion for sports. And now the state's largest public and private universities are launching new master's-degree programs in sports leadership.

About 15 Seattle University students began studying last month in the school's two-year master's program in sport administration and leadership, while the University of Washington is taking applications for its one-year master's of education in intercollegiate athletic leadership, a program that begins next summer.

UW program director Jim Antony said he's already received 50 applications for the 20 available slots and expects dozens more before the March 1 deadline.

"The fact that there are two programs rising at the same time reflects that Seattle sports culture is really hot right now," Antony said. "Seattle's just becoming this exciting place to have a conversation about athletics."

The idea is not altogether new. Similar programs are offered at other universities around the country.

The UW once offered a sports-management program, but much like some of the area's sports teams, it foundered and eventually faded. Until now.

Both programs are aimed at people who already hold full-time jobs, with classes held at night and on the weekends.

One student who's enrolled in the Seattle U program is Don Nelson, a 55-year-old Lynnwood attorney.

Nelson said he's been heavily involved in soccer his whole life — first when he attended the University of California, Los Angeles, on a soccer scholarship, then through six years of playing professionally and 30 years of coaching.

"I've always enjoyed that part of my life and want to pursue something on the administration end," Nelson said.

"I don't know where it will go, but I'd like to be an athletic director at a major college."

Seattle U hasn't been widely recognized for its sporting prowess, Nelson added, but things are changing. The school has a new athletic director, is redefining the department and is putting more emphasis on sports.

Dan Tripps, who runs the Seattle U program, said the degree is designed to cover a range of ambitions, from those students who want to run sports at the local Boys & Girls Club up to those wanting to manage professional teams.

A big part of the program is figuring out how to work with different types of people, Tripps said.

"Take the Sonics. There are the sponsors, the players, the owners and the fans. They're all looking for something different," Tripps said. "Working out how to optimize all those interests is the most difficult thing on the planet."

Both new programs emphasize work in the field, with sports teams and organizations. Both also focus on ethical issues.

The UW athletic department has been plagued by ethical scandals in recent years, but Antony said he thinks new leadership at the top and within the department will put an end to that.

"There have certainly been scandals at the UW," he said. "We are not going to shy away from that. In fact, the scandals highlight the need for this kind of program."

Tripps, however, isn't so sure, in a society that idolizes "jocks, rock stars and actors," that any university can keep sports completely clean.

The UW program will cost students \$24,000, while the Seattle U program costs about \$21,000. "There are so many great things about Seattle, but we love our sports here and that's pretty clear," Nelson said. "And we've finally got a football team."

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