Proposal: Tourism and Hospitality Certificate Program

*Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism Sciences*  
*Texas A&M University*

To address the significant and growing demand for management professionals in the fields of hospitality and tourism throughout Texas and afar, we propose the development of an undergraduate Tourism and Hospitality Certificate. The certificate will require 15 credit hours of coursework in Tourism and Hospitality. Oversight for the program will be provided by the Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism Sciences.
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Overview

The World Travel Organization predicts the tourism and hospitality industry will triple in size by 2020, thus becoming among the very largest of the world’s industries. This explosive growth will dramatically increase the demand for managers and entrepreneurs in the expansive travel industries. Substantially increased opportunities for challenging and rewarding careers will thus likely be available to graduates of top university programs in tourism and hospitality management.

These opportunities present both challenges and opportunities to academic programs in hospitality and tourism. Prominent among these challenges is providing diverse nontraditional students with access to tourism and hospitality education professional preparation programs. Diversity of the workforce is essential to success in the travel industries. Tourist markets are diverse by definition, and industry leaders fully embrace the position that diverse individuals are needed at all levels of tourism organizations to successfully attract travelers and optimally meet their needs. Thus, an increasing number of students will be needed in the travel industry at various career levels. These individuals require education opportunities that allow for maximum schedule flexibility. The current RPTS curriculum is not fully sufficient to meet these needs. It is lacking in courses that specifically focus on hospitality management, and its on-line offerings that meet varied scheduling needs are limited. Expansion and innovation of the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences tourism and hospitality management curriculum is thus needed to meet the needs of these increasingly diverse traditional and nontraditional student markets.

Tourism and Hospitality Management is a multidisciplinary field of study that integrates and applies concepts, principles, and processes from a variety of disciplines. It is a vital sector of the tourism industry, focusing on careers in resorts, hotels, and restaurants. Future tourism and hospitality leaders will need to develop skills and knowledge related to: marketing, management, finance, operations and direct service delivery.

Recent focus groups conducted by the Department Head of RPTS revealed an overwhelming response from undergraduate students requesting more hospitality management course offerings within the department. Clearly, increasing numbers of students aspire to hospitality management careers. To meet the needs of these students and to prepare for the imminent increase in diverse nontraditional students, this project will develop an online hospitality certificate program focused on increasing the opportunities for talented undergraduate students, including those from historically underrepresented demographics. The certificate program will facilitate development of autonomy and innovation among students through self-motivation, discipline, and resource management skills. These same skills will provide the unique skill set students will need to succeed as professionals in challenging and exciting hospitality management positions and as citizens in our increasingly global society.
Objectives

The specific objectives of the tourism and hospitality certificate are to:

- Facilitate learning of increasingly diverse and nontraditional students in specialized tourism and hospitality management concepts through the flexibility of online distance education courses;
- Optimize students’ learning experiences and management skills by building autonomy through self-motivation, discipline, and resource management skills required to complete an online certificate program; and
- Serve as a recruiting tool for attracting future industry leaders in hospitality, including those from underrepresented backgrounds to complete an undergraduate education program at Texas A&M.

The Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences is well-positioned to offer this certificate curriculum. The number of students declaring their major as tourism, inclusive of hospitality and events management, has consistently averaged 60% of all students enrolled as RPTS undergraduates since 2010. The overall department enrollment of 430 undergraduates is comprised of 275 students who have declared tourism as their major concentration. Of all RPTS undergraduate students securing internships in 2013, 55 percent completed an internship within the industries of tourism, hospitality and/or event management. The number of interns that we have placed in hospitality positions has increased from 10 in 2010, to 44 in 2013. In addition, there has consistently been a need to increase the enrollment size of classroom lecture courses with a focus on tourism, as student waitlists for these courses continue to increase. The program is also well positioned due to its national reputation and the strong ties it has cultivated with statewide and international stakeholders.

Goals

Creation of the online certificate program is fully aligned with one of the proposed values in achieving The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences’ vision, as stated in the College’s Strategic Plan 2010-2015, to “Create inspired teaching programs that motivate, excite, and reward students and prepare them to contribute to an ever-changing and increasingly global society.” An identified strategy associated with Imperative 5, Goal 3 is to “Expand distance education offerings,” and an action associated with that strategy highlights an increase by 50% of courses, degrees and certificate programs offered by distance education. The proposed certificate program would assist in achieving the College’s vision and imperatives under this goal. The proposed certificate program will also contribute to meeting other Imperatives and Goals set forth in the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan:

- Expand out-of-classroom learning experiences (Imperative 3, Goal 2, Strategy 1),
- Expand cross-disciplinary learning communities and enhance student peer mentoring programs (Imperative 3, Goal 2, Strategy 3),
- Enhance the awareness of faculty and their ability to teach effectively and have a global appreciation (Imperative 4, Goal 2, Strategy 1),
- Develop collaborative agreements with key industry partners (Imperative 5, Goal 1, Strategy 2), and
- Broaden the types of stakeholders (Imperative 5, Goal 1, Strategy 3)
By focusing on these goals, the proposed certificate program should enable students to:
  o Understand, integrate and apply conceptual approaches to tourism and hospitality management;
  o Consider cultural issues and their impacts on management decisions in hospitality and tourism;
  o Use research and evaluation skills to improve marketing, financial, and business processes in collaborations with local industry partners;
  o Learn the nature and dynamics of the tourism and hospitality industry, its sectors and public and private businesses;
  o Understand various management paradigms and methods in running a business or an organization in the tourism and hospitality industries;
  o Apply theoretical knowledge into the practical businesses of tourism hospitality;
  o Make decisions and judgments as well as provide leadership in tourism and hospitality businesses or organizations;
  o Display creative and analytical skills in addressing factors relevant to tourism and hospitality business management;
  o Improve critical thinking and writing skills; and
  o Have contact with a broad range of stakeholders to collaborate on projects, leading to increased awareness and industry respect of the program and its students.

Components

1- A 15 credit hour Tourism and Hospitality Management Certificate program will be created. Necessary approvals will be sought to offer the program exclusively on-line, with additional open sections for local students who wish to enroll in specific classes in the program.

2- To introduce students to the newly developed program, a web-based orientation tool will be created and face-to-face briefings will be conducted in current RPTS courses. The web tool and briefings will provide an overview of the program, introduction of certificate advisors and will identify specific courses and electives available to those pursuing the certification.

3- The certificate will require five courses. It is notable that the courses in this program will address the expressed needs of our current students for new and additional classes in hospitality management, while also allowing us to meet the needs of new nontraditional students. The proposed courses include three current RPTS courses and development of two new courses developed for approval in conjunction with this proposal. The certificate will encompass the following:
  o RPTS 302: Application of Tourism Principles
  o RPTS 331: Tourism Marketing
  o RPTS 423: Resort and Hotel Management
  o RPTS 489: Planning and Implementation of Events in Resorts and Hotels
  o RPTS 489: Service Quality for Hospitality Organizations

The core courses may count toward other degree or certification programs; however, the student must maintain a 2.5 minimum GPA in the certificate courses, with no grade lower than a C.

Learning Outcomes

1- Students will be able to understand the complexity of issues involved in developing and implementing a marketing plan for hospitality and tourism entities, identifying target markets
for focused promotions, and planning and implementing events and programs for resorts and hotels.

2- Students will be able to identify and implement components of service quality to enhance the hospitality experience.

3- Students will gain access to industry leaders to learn how concepts studied in the courses are applied to real world working environments.

4- Students will be offered the opportunity to work with persons of varying cultures and ethnicities to promote acceptance and develop professionalism when working with individuals of differing backgrounds.

5- Students will develop an understanding of business administration, operations, technology management, financial applications, and consumer behavior, all needed to secure management positions within hospitality and tourism industries.

**Eligibility**

To apply for a certificate, a student must complete an application form no later than their junior year, file a degree plan with the administering department, and maintain a GPA of at least 2.5 at the time of application. Senior transfer students may be accepted at the discretion of the department if their degree plans allows sufficient time remaining for completion of all requirements before graduation. The department reserves the right to limit the number of applicants admitted based on the resources available to administer the program.

**Administration**

The Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism Sciences will retain and manage records for those admitted to the certificate program. Departmental faculty will serve as advisors and instructors to students. At the discretion of the Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, or the Head of the participating department, a Coordinating Committee composed of faculty may be appointed. The department will be responsible for communicating with the registrar’s office when a student has successfully completed the certificate requirements.

**Award of Certificate**

Students completing all requirements will receive a certificate acknowledging completion from the administering department. The certificate will appear on the student’s official transcript.
Catalog Description

Tourism and Hospitality Management Certificate Program
Open to All Majors

The Tourism and Hospitality Management Certificate Program (THMCP), offered by the Department of Recreations, Parks, and Tourism Sciences, is designed to provide students with an understanding of the planning, analysis, and decision-making techniques needed for management positions in tourism and hospitality industries. Students will study and develop skills related to principles of management, sustainability, development, cultural tolerance, marketing, finance, and service quality as they apply to the hospitality and tourism industries. The THMCP requires a minimum of 15 credit hours in designated courses, offered both online and on campus. Students must earn a grade of “C” or better in each course used to meet the requirements. Students who pursue the THMCP must complete all requirements prior to graduation. Specific certificate requirements are available in the Undergraduate Programs Office of the department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism Sciences.

Program Modules

Tourism and Hospitality Certificate Program Modules
Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism Sciences

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Course Descriptions
Texas A&M University
Course Descriptions for Tourism and Hospitality Certificate

RPTS 302. Application of Tourism Principles. (3-o). Credit 3. Tourism principles applied at local, regional and international levels; examination of the scale, scope and organization of the industry including marketing destinations and experiences; issues related to the economic, technological and political aspects of tourism.

RPTS 331. Tourism Marketing. (3-o). Credit 3. Application of basic tourism marketing principles and concepts in government, business, and social-cause contexts; situation analysis and operational evaluation; decision making in terms of product, place, price, and channel of distribution mixes for tourism attractions and services. Prerequisite: RPTS 302 or approval of instructor.

RPTS 423. Hospitality and Tourism Management. (3-o). Credit 3. Managing tourism and hospitality businesses; organization, complexity and scope of tourism and hospitality systems; issues related to distribution, operations and sustainability, managing tourism and hospitality industries in different environments; roles of technology and information technology, future of hospitality and tourism. Prerequisites: RPTS 302

RPTS 489. Planning and Implementation of Events in Resorts and Hotels (3-o). Credit 3. Planning, operations, administration and evaluation of events held at resorts and hotels; includes creation and implementation of programs and special events with budgeting, operational and venue logistics, marketing, fund raising, hospitality training and participant satisfaction.

RPTS 489. Service Quality for Hospitality Organizations (3-o). Credit 3. Application of SERVQUAL aspects with focus on implementing each measure to enhance customer service experiences within the hospitality and tourism industries; planning and administering of hospitality service strategy; measurement of service delivery; repair and recovery of service delivery gaps; management and training of employees.

Metrics of Success
The program faculty will meet twice per year to discuss progress of the students and to assess the degree to which goals and outcomes are being achieved. The assessment approach will include both program and student learning outcome assessments. Program assessments will include development of courses in specified time frames, posting of program in specified time frames, evaluation of recruitment strategies, enrollment of projected number of students, time-to-graduation, and student experiences. Direct and indirect measures of learning outcomes will also be developed.
Letters of Support
LETTER OF SUPPORT

DATE: April 7, 2014

TO: Department of Recreation, Park & Tourism Sciences Texas A&M University

FROM: Hunter Goodwin
c/o The Oldham Goodwin Group, LLC
2800 South Texas Ave. Suite 401
Bryan, TX 77802
Work #: (979) 266-2000
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E-mail: hunter.goodwin@oldhamgoodwin.com


It is with great excitement that I write this letter of support for the newly proposed Tourism and Hospitality Certificate Program. I am currently the President and COO of a company with over four hundred (400) employees, with the vast majority directly involved with some aspect of hotel and food & beverage management.

The Leisure and Hospitality Industry continues to be in the top five (5) nationally and within the State of Texas for employment opportunity, and forecasted growth trends predict this industry to become one of the largest, if not the largest global industry in the future. The current growth and future growth is placing an ever increasing demand for qualified managers on an industry that is already underserved.

The tourism industry is evolving daily with new products, technology and innovation changing the way we experience locations. Lodging and food service go hand in hand and are key elements with regards to delivering on these new and ever-evolving experiential customer demands.

Based off my understanding of the objectives of the newly proposed Tourism and Hospitality Certificate Program, this certification will provide for a highly focused curriculum that is concentrated on addressing the growing demand for management professionals in the fields of tourism, specifically within hotels and restaurants. These industries are ripe with opportunities and filling them with qualified and highly trained candidates is a global necessity, and one Texas A&M should feel obligated to lead in finding a solution.

I am formerly giving my letter of support of this program and proud that my alma mater, Texas A&M, is taking a lead role in solving a significant industry problem, which is finding a solution through this certificate program, to solve the problem of not enough qualified, diverse candidates for both current and future jobs available within the tourism industry.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
R. Hunter Goodwin
President & COO
The Oldham Goodwin Group, LLC
2800 South Texas Ave. Suite 401
Bryan, TX 77802
To Whom It May Concern:

I was pleased to learn that the Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism Sciences is pursuing a Tourism and Hospitality Certificate Program. This would be of great benefit as the need for qualified professionals within the hospitality sector is growing exponentially.

I have worked in the hospitality industry for 20 years, beginning when I was a student myself at Texas A&M. Having been exposed to every aspect of the restaurant industry, from operations to management, I can say that I see true value in the proposed certificate.

With the continuous growth of the entire hospitality industry, this certificate would allow for students to receive exceptional preparation, thus making them even more competitive upon entry into the workforce. The Tourism and Hospitality Certificate Program would provide students with a multifaceted learning experience focused on hospitality management.

If I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to call me. Thank you for your time and your commitment to the Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism Sciences.

Regards,

[Signature]

Jimmy Loup ‘96
Founder & CEO
Grub Burger Bar