Curriculum Enhancement
Undergraduate major in Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences

Abstract
We are proposing revisions to the undergraduate major in recreation, park and tourism sciences, in order to accomplish the following:

- Afford our students opportunity to earn transcripted certificates that will be recognized in more than one sector of our broad industry and thereby enhance their career options
- Provide us with opportunity to improve quality while serving substantially increased number of students
- Result in our program being more consistent with professional accreditation and national trends toward emphasizing a common core of foundational understandings rather than narrow specialization areas.

The number of credits required for a degree will be unchanged. The new program will, though, afford students opportunities to meet select core curriculum requirements in new ways, and it will make available certificate programs in specialized facets of the park, recreation, and tourism industry. Certificate programs will be available in tourism management, youth development, park and recreation administration, and parks and conservation.
Need for Curriculum Revision

Several factors point to the need for revision of the curriculum for the Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences Major, Bachelor of Science degree. Prominent among these is the fact that explosive demand for our major in an era of substantially reduced financial resources has made it necessary for us to search for approaches that allow us to serve greater numbers of students with sustained or improved quality. This section provides a summary of our situation and a rationale for the new curriculum that we are proposing.

Between Fall Semester of Academic Year 2010 and Spring Semester of 2012, our undergraduate RPTS major population increased 81%, from 242 students to 439 students. In addition to this increase in our number of undergraduate majors, we have also developed and implemented a Professional Event Manager Certificate Program that is available to students in any major. That program was implemented at the beginning of Academic Year 2012. By the end of AY 2012, 53 students had enrolled in that certificate program. Additional programs are under development that feature distance education opportunities and exciting interdisciplinary study opportunities. Great potential exists for further increases in demand for our classes.

Our number of faculty members has declined during this same period in which we have witnessed this dramatic growth in demand for our classes. We lost two associate professors to budget reductions in AY 2012. We also lost additional funds that could have been used to secure part-time faculty to teach classes. Limited seating capacity of classrooms also places constraints on our offerings. Due to limited classroom sizes and limited numbers of teachers available to teach required classes, students are increasingly challenged (stressed) to gain access to classes they need to progress toward their degrees.

At a glance, we might attribute the problem to oversubscription, and craft an approach to resolution that focuses on reducing our numbers of majors. Review of ratios of faculty to numbers of majors in benchmark institutions, however, suggests that our new ratios are not unreasonable. With curriculum revision, we can address this growth in demand. Our current ratio of number of tenure-track faculty members to number of students is 1:24. Those ratios at two comparable programs in land grant institutions are 1:23 (North Carolina State University) and 1:42 (University of Illinois). Comparison with other social science departments is also informative. In the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, our ratio is third among the three social science units. In Agricultural Economics, the faculty to student ratio is 1:28, and in Agriculture Leadership, Education, and Communication, the ratio is 1:57. In an era of diminished resources, it would be difficult to justify returning to the ratio that existed prior to AY 2010, which was 1:11 (22 faculty members to 242 RPTS undergraduate majors).

Curriculum revision is the key to resolving this challenge. We propose implementation of new requirements that result in students having a greater number of options for completing core requirements. Our current curriculum requires all students to complete eight designated classes: RPTS 201, 202, 311, 336, 340, 403, 481, and 484. Three of our four specialization areas also require RPTS 304. We note, however, that the role that some of these classes play in professional preparation can be met equally well by studying similar concepts and processes in other contexts through other classes in our program. Further, we note that efficiencies that we may gain through creating these options align well with a new set of learning outcomes standards that will be required for professional accreditation of our undergraduate major in recreation, park and tourism sciences. These standards will be enforced, effective 2013. The accrediting body, the Council on Accreditation for Parks, Recreation, Tourism, and Related Professions (COAPRT) specifies that programs will help students acquire learning outcomes in four areas: foundational understandings, design of recreation and tourism experience
offerings/products, management/administration of organizations in the recreation, park and tourism industries, and applied knowledge through an internship of at least 400 clock hours.

Alignment of our requirements with this model yields efficiencies that we need to meet the increased demand. Foundational understandings and an introduction to designing recreation and tourism experience offerings can be addressed through maintaining the requirement that students complete RPTS 201, 336, and 311. Options are available, however, for other critical elements of the program. Management of internal operations, for example, is taught in different contexts (and with other differing content) in RPTS 304 (park and recreation management) and 423 (resort management). Students should be afforded opportunity to choose either of these classes. Strategic management and marketing of recreation, park and tourism organizations is addressed in different contexts in RPTS 202 and 331. Three different classes provide students opportunity to learn about designing and implementing recreation and tourism experience-offerings in specialized contexts (e.g., heritage interpretation, RPTS 307; park design, RPTS 402; and youth services, RPTS 372). RPTS 401, 403 and 474 address strategic management; the first in the context of for-profit tourism and commercial recreation businesses, the second in the context of public parks and recreation, and the third in the context of youth-serving organizations. This strategy will disperse demand that currently exists for a narrow set of prescribed classes across a greater number of our curriculum offerings. Efficiencies that empower us to serve greater numbers of students will result.

This revised curriculum also yields a number of additional benefits. Alumni surveys indicate that approximately 40% of our former students pursue careers outside of parks, recreation and tourism. (Military service and careers in faith-based organizations are common). These students should benefit from a broader, less specialized curriculum. Students can choose to study content in a much greater variety of contexts.

Students who do pursue careers in parks, recreation, and tourism and desire to specialize will also benefit. The efficiencies gained will allow us to offer certificates in four specialization areas that correspond to major sectors of the parks, recreation, and tourism industry: tourism management, recreation and park administration, youth development, and parks and conservation. Our current curriculum requires all students to specialize in one of these four areas. Under the proposed set of requirements, students will have the opportunity to earn more than one certificate. A given student, for example, might earn a certificate in both parks and conservation and in tourism management. Another student might earn both a tourism management certificate and a youth development certificate. Graduates who wish to pursue careers in parks, recreation, and tourism will be more fully empowered to pursue careers in more diverse professional environments. The fact that certificate programs will be transcripted will highlight this preparation, and may make our graduates more successful in competing for entry level positions in our profession. Graduates who choose careers outside the recreation, park and tourism industries will have received a “more rounded” preparation involving classes in several of our specialization areas.

Proposed Curriculum Requirements
The proposed curriculum is summarized in Table 1. Core requirements include classes in foundational knowledge (including diversity), provision of recreation and tourism experience offerings, and operations and strategic management/administration of park, recreation, and tourism organizations. Required courses from outside the RPTS department (accounting, technical writing, statistics, and 6 credits of math to include 141, 142, 167 and/or PHIL 240) were deemed necessary for skill development in order for students to be successful in upper-level courses and in their careers.
Table 1: Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences
Proposed RPTS Major Curriculum

**Departmental Core Requirements (22 hrs)**

Both of the following classes on Foundational Knowledge
- RPTS 201 Foundations of Recreation, Parks and Tourism (3)
- RPTS 336 Research Methods in Recreation and Tourism (3)

One class on fundamentals of designing and staging recreation and tourism experiences
- RPTS 311 Planning and Implementation of Events and Programs (3)

The following class, providing an overview of tourism and an introduction to marketing recreation, park and tourism products/offerings:
- RPTS 302 Application of Tourism Principles (3)

The following course on diversity in parks, recreation, and tourism:
- RPTS 340 Diverse Populations in Recreation, Parks and Tourism (3) (D)

The following class on career development and internship preparation:
- RPTS 481 Seminar (1)

**Internship**
- RPTS 484 Internship (6)

**Additional Core Curriculum Requirements (12 hrs):** ENGL 301 (3 hrs); RENR 201 (3 hrs); STAT 201, 302 or 303 (3 hrs); ACCT 209 (3 hrs.)

**Certificate Programs (19 hours each) – RPTS Majors must complete at least one Certificate**

*Each Certificate includes specified courses from the categories below as well as additional courses:*

One of the following courses on managing recreation, park and tourism organizations:
- RPTS 304 Administration of Recreation Resource Agencies (3)
- RPTS 423 Tourism Management (3)

One of the following courses on strategic management of park, recreation and tourism organizations:
- RPTS 401 Tourism and Recreation Enterprises (W) (4)
- RPTS 403 Financing and Marketing Recreation, Park and Tourism Resources (W) (4)
- RPTS 474 Administration of Programs and Services for Youth (W) (4)

One of the following courses on designing experiences in specialized settings:
- RPTS 307 Methods of Environmental Interpretation (3)
- RPTS 320 Event Management and Operations I (3)
- RPTS 371 Understanding and Developing Effective Skills for Youth Development (3)
- RPTS 402 Park Planning and Design (C) (3)

Courses eligible for substitution in this area include field-based study courses, study abroad courses and courses taken as a part of a reciprocal exchange experience.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourism Management</th>
<th>Youth Development</th>
<th>Community Recreation &amp; Park Administration</th>
<th>Parks and Conservation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RPTS 320 (3)</td>
<td>RPTS 304 (3)</td>
<td>RPTS 209 (3)</td>
<td>RPTS 304 (3)</td>
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<td>RPTS 331 (3)</td>
<td>RPTS 370 (3)</td>
<td>RPTS 304 (3) or 423 (3)</td>
<td>RPTS 307 (3)</td>
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<td>RPTS 401W (4) or 403W (4)</td>
<td>RPTS 371 (3)</td>
<td>RPTS 370 (3)</td>
<td>RPTS 316 (3)</td>
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<td>RPTS 423 (3)</td>
<td>RPTS 474W (4)</td>
<td>RPTS 402C (3)</td>
<td>RPTS 402C (3)</td>
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<td>RPTS 426W (3)</td>
<td>RPTS 478W (3)</td>
<td>RPTS 403W (4)</td>
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<td>RPTS Elective (3)</td>
<td>RPTS Elective(3)</td>
<td>RPTS Elective (3)</td>
<td>RPTS 460W (3)</td>
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Credits Toward Graduation (total of 120 required):
University Core: 42
Departmental Core: 22
Additional Core: 12
Certificate/Specialized Electives: 19
Free Electives: 25

Learning Outcomes

The proposed curriculum aligns well with established learning outcomes for our undergraduate program in recreation, park and tourism sciences. RPTS graduates will:

1. Demonstrate reasoning, communication, diversity, and analytic skills appropriate to a strong general education.
2. Acquire practical experience through the application of recreation, park and tourism principles, theories and analytical methods by successfully completing professional internships.
3. Articulate knowledge of the scope of the profession, professional practice, and the history, scientific, and philosophical foundations of recreation, park and tourism industries.
4. Demonstrate the ability to design, plan, and implement recreation and tourism experiences among a diversity of clientele, settings, cultures, and contexts.
5. Apply profession-related principles and practices of management and administration.
The table below relates these learning outcomes to course offerings in the proposed program.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
<th>TAMU Gen Ed Program</th>
<th>Proposed RPTS Core Requirements</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>201</td>
<td>336</td>
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<td>1. Gen Ed.</td>
<td>P</td>
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<td>2. Internship</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Foundations</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Experiences</td>
<td>S</td>
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<td>5. Management and marketing</td>
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<td>P</td>
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P=Primary
S=Secondary

Student Eligibility for Certificate Programs
The four certificate programs would be open only to RPTS majors. The core curriculum required will provide an essential context for those programs. It is important to note that some classes that are completed as core requirements may also be applied toward one or more certificate programs. Thus, students will be afforded opportunity to pursue either a curriculum focused on a specialization area directed at professional preparation, or they may choose a broader curriculum arguably better aligned with enhancing general education outcomes.

Administration and Award of Certificates
The Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences will administer the program and will award the certificates.

Catalog Description
Four optional certificate programs are available to recreation, park and tourism sciences majors. Each of these affords students opportunity for specialized study in a facet of the park, recreation, and tourism industry that is of special interest. The Tourism Management certificate program involves study of the travel, tourism, and hospitality industry. That program may be of particular interest to students who are interested in careers in hotels, resorts, event coordination, destination attractions (e.g., theme parks), cruise ships, and in destination promotion organizations such as convention and visitors’ bureaus. The youth development certificate engages students in study of social, cultural, and biological factors associated with transformation from youth to adulthood, with focus on the vast network of agencies and services that facilitate those transformations during out-of-school time. The recreation and park administration certificate involves study of topics that may serve as a gateway to exciting careers in city, county, or special district park and recreation agencies. The parks and conservation certificate program provides special learning about management, operation, and protection of natural and heritage areas. Students pursuing the parks and conservation certificate may be interested in careers in state parks, national parks, national forests, conservation NGOs and related areas.
Appendix A
Current Curriculum
RPTS Approved Curriculum, AY 2012

Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences
RPTS 201 Foundations of Recreation and Parks (3)
RPTS 202 Foundations of Tourism (3)
RPTS 311 Recreation and Tourism Programs (3)
RPTS 336 Recreation Research and Analysis (3)
RPTS 340 Recreation, Parks and Diverse Populations (3)
RPTS 403 Financing and Marketing Recreation, Park and Tourism Resources (W course) (4)
RPTS 481 Seminar (1)
RPTS 484 Internship (6)

Community Recreation and Park Administration Option
ENGL 210 Scientific and Technical Writing or ENGL 301 Technical Writing (3)
RENR 201 Computer Applications in Agriculture (3)
RENR 375 Conservation of Natural Resources or RPTS 316 Recreation Management of Wildlands (3)
RPTS 209 Park and Tourism Operations (3)
RPTS 304 Administration of Recreation Resource Agencies (W course) (3)
RPTS 307 Methods of Environmental Interpretation (3)
RPTS 402 Park Planning and Design (4)
Statistics (3)
Social sciences electives (6)
Departmental electives (3)
Special electives (9)
Free electives (51)

Tourism Management Option
ENGL 210 Scientific and Technical Writing or ENGL 301 Technical Writing (3)
RENR 201 Computer Applications in Agriculture (3)
RENR 375 Conservation of Natural Resources or RPTS 316 Recreation Management of Wildlands or RENR/RPTS 460 Nature, Values, and Protected Areas (W course) or RPTS 360 Ecotourism (3)
RPTS 331 Tourism Marketing (3)
RPTS 423 Resort and Tourism Management (3)
RPTS 426 Tourism Impacts (W course) (3)
RPTS 446 Information Technology Adoption and Use in Recreation, Park and Tourism Organizations (3)
Statistics (3)
Accounting or economics electives (9)
Social sciences electives (6)
Special electives (6)
Free electives (51)
Parks and Conservation Option
ENGL 210 Scientific and Technical Writing or ENGL 301 Technical Writing (3)
REN 201 Computer Applications in Agriculture (3)
REN/RPTS 460 Nature, Values, and Protected Areas (W course) (3)
RPTS 209 Park and Tourism Operations (3)
RPTS 304 Administration of Recreation Resource Agencies (W course) (3)
RPTS 307 Methods of Environmental Interpretation (3)
RPTS 402 Park Planning and Design (4)
Statistics (3)
Natural sciences (4)
Natural resource recreation and conservation electives: choose three of the following five courses:
REN 375, RPTS 301, RPTS 316, REN/RPTS 420, RPTS 360 (9)
Social sciences electives (3)
Special electives (3)
Free electives (51)

Youth Development Option
ENGL 210 Scientific and Technical Writing or ENGL 301 Technical Writing (3)
REN 201 Computer Applications in Agriculture (3)
REN 375 Conservation of Natural Resources or RPTS 316 Recreation Management of Wildlands (3)
RPTS 307 Methods of Environmental Interpretation, RPTS 402 Park Planning and Design
or RPTS 489 Camp Administration (3-4)
RPTS 370 Youth Development Organizations and Services (3)
RPTS 372 Youth Development Practice (3)
RPTS 374 Administration of Programs and Services for Youth (W course) (3)
RPTS 476 Leadership for Outdoor Recreation (3)
Accounting and economics elective (3)
Social and behavioral sciences elective (3)
Statistics elective (3)
Special electives (6)
Free electives (51)