Greetings from Sacramento! I wanted to take this opportunity to give you an update on what we've been doing over the past year. Overall, we have had a fantastic academic year and we have lots of great news to share. Over the past two summers, we have supervised 54 interns throughout California and in Arizona and Florida. We graduated 40 students, one of whom, Lia Robertson, was honored at the winter commencement. Please go to this website to hear her reflect on her experience at Sacramento State and in our department (http://www.csus.edu/pa/slideshow/Robertson/). We are very proud of her accomplishments. We officially changed our department name and most of the course names as well; we worked with the College of Business to become one of their concentration areas; we have been actively recruiting new students, growing the graduate program, attending conferences in California and across the United States; and working hard to create a strong academic program.

The State Park Visitor Survey is a major undertaking by RTPA, working with the California Dept. of Park & Recreation’s Planning Division, and at its core are 18 Sacramento State RPTA students and four RPTA faculty, as well as students from Humboldt and Long Beach CSU’s. Department faculty members David Rolloff, Dana Kivel, Kath Pinch, and Beth Erickson have been working on the study since last summer, and data collection will continue through the end of 2009. Visitors at 26 park units all over the state are being surveyed in an interview in which students are the primary data collectors. The purpose of the survey is to document visitor characteristics, expenditures on park trips, attitudes and opinions about park management and resource quality, as well as visitor impressions of park programs and facilities. Thus far over 7,000 interviews have been conducted in the first three seasons of the study. The study has become a significant professional work opportunity for the student researchers, who often travel in the field for up to a week at a time conducting interviews and camping in the parks. The winter weather was a particularly challenging part of the study thus far, so everyone really enjoyed the warmer spring and summer weather.

Reflections on Leisure or “How important is it?”

- Young people’s leisure time and volunteer activities relate directly to many of the issues affecting them, such as education and employment. (World Youth Report 2003)

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What are our current students up to?

The RPTA Department is proud to announce that two of our Therapeutic Recreation students, Jennifer Taylor and Sandra Howery, were the recipients of the 2008 Peg Connolly TR Scholarship Award. Nationally, this award is given to less than a dozen students per year. Named in honor of Dr. Peg Connolly, former Executive Director of the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification, this program provides a tremendous experience for students by giving them the opportunity to network with industry professionals from around the country. Congratulations, Jenn & Sandra!

RPTA major Justin Gomez is currently working in Campus Orientation as a Student Orientation Coordinator. He coordinates all of the Student Orientation Leaders, making sure they all have the proper training and information to assist new students with their transition to campus by providing programs and services that outline the University’s academic requirements as well as social and developmental opportunities.

The same Jennifer Taylor, who is also a part-time lecturer in the department, won Best of Show and 1st Place at the CA State Fair for her Peanut Butter Protein Fudge. Way to go, Jenn!

Where in the world are our grads?

Pavlina Latkova (’03), a graduate of both our bachelor’s and master’s programs, has recently been offered a position as an Assistant Professor at San Francisco State University. She is a native of the Czech Republic and first discovered recreation through a work exchange program that allowed her to spend a summer at a Girl Scout camp in the Sierra. While at Sacramento State, she participated in multiple student activities and trips and, as a graduate student, she worked as a classroom instructor and a research assistant. She completed her doctorate at Michigan State University. We are very proud of her accomplishments and look forward to having her as a colleague in the CSU.

David Patterson (’01), a graduate of our master’s program, worked as a graduate assistant in Recreational Sports on the Sac State campus. David was accepted into the University of Ottawa’s Ph.D. program in Human Kinetics, with a specialization in Sport Management.

Lia Robertson (’07), was recently promoted to Park Interpretive Specialist at Effie Yeaw Nature Center in Sacramento County. She will oversee the on-site Nature Tour programs and the Naturalist on Duty. She will train and evaluate new employees on these programs, and occasionally write grants and do fund raising.

GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

In Fall of 2007 we welcomed almost 20 new graduate students into our Department. We now have more than 50 students pursuing their M.S. degree in Recreation Administration, a sign of the strength of our program. We have become a destination of choice, attracting a diverse student body from students who are recent graduates to professionals with many years of experience in their fields. Many of our students have studied and worked in recreation, parks and tourism, but we also have many students who have “found” their way to us from different fields of study and work. This richness of background of the student body, together with a graduate faculty with wide interests and expertise, makes the RPTA Department and Sacramento State an exciting place for graduate study. A graduate degree can open a door for those seeking a new career in recreation, parks and tourism; it can expand the professional opportunities for those already working in the field; and it can be a stepping stone to doctoral studies and a career in academia. Students graduating from the program have gone on to achieve success in all of these arenas. The achievement of some of our recent graduates and current students are highlighted in this Newsletter. For more information, contact our Graduate Coordinator Kath Pinch who would be more than happy to answer any questions. Call her at (916) 278-6880 or e-mail her at pinch@csus.edu.
T.R. Program Explodes!

Sacramento State has seen an increase this past year in students pursuing a degree in the therapeutic recreation option. Currently, with 50 undergraduate and 10 graduate students, the program at Sacramento State has quickly become one of the largest therapeutic recreation academic programs in the CSU system. Therapeutic recreation, best known as the provision of treatment and recreation services to persons with disabilities, (ATRA, 2007) is one of the fastest growing professions in the recreation field. With the increase in soldiers with disabilities returning home from the Middle East wars, increases in the aging population, more individuals surviving illnesses and traumatic events, and the demand for more community programs for individuals with disabilities, the jobs for recrea-tional therapists have increased exponentially. This increase in positions has happened so fast that currently there are not enough recre-a-tional therapists to fill these positions. The Department is excited to start training a large number of recreational therapists in Northern California to help “grow the profession” and provide direct services to a diverse population. If you are a current practicing recreational therapist and would like to provide internship opportunities to students, please contact the Therapeutic Recreation Coordinator, Dr. Jennifer Piatt to set up an internship contract at jenpiatt@csus.edu or (916) 278-2937.

Outreach and Recruitment

The word has gotten out about the Recreation, Parks & Tourism Administration major and students are responding! This year we have seen an exciting increase in majors from 151 in 2006 to 188 in 2007. Collectively, the faculty and staff have been working to increase our numbers by strategically marketing our program through outreach events and promotions. In addition to our department name change, we have adopted the slogan “The Discovery Major,” as many students discover our major after they become a student. One of our faculty members, Lisa Jorgensen, is leading the outreach and recruitment effort in our department by coordinating our participation in various community and community college outreach events and she will spend this year working with the university’s department of Outreach and Admissions to promote the university and our major. Last fall, we participated in the “Transfer Day” events held at five local “feeder” community colleges, including American River, Sacramento City, Cosumnes River, Folsom Lake and Sierra. These events specifically target students who are interested in transferring to a four-year university. In addition to off campus events, we are also involved in recruiting students on campus. Last spring we held a very successful “Majors Fair.”

RPTA teams up with College of Business Administration

We’re very excited that beginning this year, the College of Business Administration has allowed its students to take classes in the area of Commercial Recreation, Tourism and Hospitality and has listed us as a “concentration area” for business majors in their promotional material. We anticipate that several students in the College of Business will become minors in RPTA. We have also begun discussions about pursuing a joint degree in Hospitality Management.

Professor Uses Grant to Study Outdoor Education in Norway

Dr. David Rolloff was awarded an ACE Travel Grant through Sacramento State’s Office of Global Education and spent two weeks on a study travel journey to Norway in May 2008. As an undergraduate in the 1980s Dr. Rolloff had spent a year and a half in Norway, but this marked his first return to the country in 18 years. He visited a colleague in central Norway’s Trøndelag district and gave a talk as part of a spring lecture series at the University of Northern Trøndelag, “Friluftsliv i Norge Forhold til Outdoor Education i USA” (a comparison between the Norwegian cultural outdoor education/philosophy of “friluftsliv” compared to outdoor education in the US). As part of his visit he was able to accompany his colleague Eivind Sæther’s class trip on old wooden Viking-style boats for three days of sailing on the Trondheims Fjord (see photo). David recalls that his Norwegian language skills worked very well after almost two decades.
SPOTLIGHT ON AN ALUM — Rick Obernesser ('78)

Rick Obernesser ('78) graduated from Sacramento State 30 years ago with a Bachelor of Science degree. He was one of the last 8 graduates in the old Environmental Resources program. His first ranger experience was as a Park Ranger Assistant with Sacramento County, at Elk Grove Park. He was responsible for emptying trash, cleaning bathrooms and preparing ball diamonds for softball games. The CSUS Directed Field Experience (now known as Internships) helped Rick gain that first experience as a ranger. After graduation, Rick was hired by the Corps of Engineers as a Park Aid at Englebright Lake, in the foothills of the Sierra east of Marysville. Rick subsequently worked at two other Corps Projects in California and a detail at the District Office in Sacramento before becoming a Park Technician with the Bureau of Land Management in southern Nevada. Rick worked at Red Rock Canyon Recreation Lands and in 1984 he landed his first Park Ranger position with the National Park Service at Petrified Forest National Park in eastern Arizona. From there, Rick transferred to Glen Canyon National Recreation Area in southern Utah, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Yosemite National Park, Cape Cod National Seashore and, ten years ago, Rick was selected for the position of Chief Ranger at Yellowstone. Rick was in Sacramento recently and stopped by to visit the campus and spoke to Dr. Erickson’s graduate administration class.
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Rick Obernesser ('78) graduated from CSU Sacramento 30 years ago with a Bachelor of Science degree. He was one of the last 8 graduates in the old Environmental Resources program. Rick had his first Ranger experience, as a Park Ranger Assistant with Sacramento County, at Elk Grove Park. Emptying trash cans, cleaning bathrooms and preparing ball diamonds for softball games were the duties of a Ranger back then. The CSUS Directed Field Experience (DFE) program developed by the department faculty, especially Dr. Edward H. Sato, helped Rick gain that first experience as a Ranger. Immediately after graduating in 1978 Rick was hired by the Corps of Engineers as a Park Aid at Englebright Lake, in the foothills of the Sierra east of Marysville. It was another connection between the CSUS faculty and professional practitioners that help Rick land this job. Rick subsequently worked at two other Corps Projects in California and a detail at the District Office in Sacramento before becoming a Park Technician with the Bureau of Land Management in southern Nevada. With the BLM, Rick worked 30 minutes west of Las Vegas at a popular hiking and climbing area known as Red Rock Canyon Recreation Lands. Three years later, in 1984 Rick landed his first Park Ranger position with the National Park Service at Petrified Forest National Park in eastern Arizona. From there, Rick transferred to Glen Canyon National Recreation Area in southern Utah, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Yosemite National Park, Cape Cod National Seashore and, ten years ago, Rick was selected for the position of Chief Ranger at Yellowstone. Rick recently visited the campus and spoke to Dr. Erickson’s graduate administration class. Rick reminded us that technical skills, in all aspect of Public Safety as well as excellent knowledge of the resources one is charged with protecting are critical to the success of a Park Ranger. He also advised us that the very subjects he studied in our program, 30+ years ago, including Administration, Finance, Supervision, Planning and more are critical to the continued success of a Ranger, a supervisor, a manager and a Leader.