Although three assessment options were provided by Dr. Christo in terms of how to report our student learning outcomes, this report will be a conglomerate of all three – answering some questions in option 1, discussing our department portfolio in terms of option 2 and discussing outcomes related to national accreditation in response to option 3.

**Narrative Submission – Option 1**

In the past two years, the department has undergone many changes that directly and indirectly influence student outcomes. Collectively, we recognized the need to grow our major because of increasing retirements in all sectors of our discipline (commercial, municipal and non-profit) which has led to an increased demand for professionals in the field of recreation, parks and tourism. We also want to grow the major because while we offer an important service to the university through our numerous General Education classes, we would like to increase the ratio of majors to non-majors in our department.

Moreover, we also recognized that the former department name, Recreation and Leisure Studies, did not adequately represent the expertise of our entire faculty, nor did the public, including students, easily grasp the substance and significance our discipline, we took a major step to re-name ourselves the Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism Administration. With this change, also came numerous discussions about our undergraduate and graduate curricula and this year we are in the process of making curricular changes for the 2008-2010 catalogue. Some changes are the result of the name change and are primarily structural in nature (e.g., changing a course title), but in other instances, especially in terms of therapeutic recreation, changes are less the result of student outcome data and more the result of national certification requirements.

The culminating experience for our students in this degree program is an internship experience where students work at a recreation, parks and/or tourism agency (including hospitals, clinics, etc.) for between 10 and 12 units of course credit. Each student intern is supervised by a faculty member in the department and an agency supervisor. In the past few years, based on feedback from students and professionals in the field, we have
tightened our internship processes to ensure a better educational experience for students and a better professional placement for our agency collaborators. Beginning this summer, internship faculty supervisors met, either in person, or on the phone, with agency supervisors mid-way through the internship experience to assess the students’ performance and to determine if there are gaps in their educational knowledge base that should be addressed through curriculum revisions. Overall, students and agency supervisors felt that our students were, academically, well prepared except for the following:

1. Students and agency supervisors in the commercial area noted that students needed to be more well versed in using Banquet Event Ordering, a process used in the hospitality industry and a process for which there are numerous software packages that may be helpful for students to learn.

2. Budgeting and Finance – although these two areas are covered in several of our courses, students, faculty, staff and professionals in our field that students need more training and education in these two areas.

We are now in the process of looking to either create a course to cover these topical areas or adding more information about these topics into existing courses. We hope to have something in place by the spring of 2009 at the latest.

**Student Survey**

We conducted a student survey in the spring 2006 semester which assessed student satisfaction with the learning outcomes, including the portfolio. Overall, students reported a high degree of satisfaction with achievement of learning outcomes within the major, particularly in terms of meeting the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA standards). We initiated a change in the portfolio evaluation process as a result of this survey. Another result of this survey was a decision to focus more on outreach efforts in local park districts, community colleges, and high schools to recruit more majors.

Additionally, the faculty spent a great deal of time the past two years working on curriculum development, continuing with a revision of the mission statement, goals, etc. Our department Curriculum Committee continues to meet and reports back regularly to faculty at our department faculty meetings. Additionally, we have formed a separate curriculum committee that is composed of faculty members and members of our Advisory Board. This has implications for assessment as we analyze and revise competencies needed in each course.

**Portfolio Assessment – Option 2 (Exemplar submission)**

The development of the Portfolio Assessment continued within our department. Students are informed of the portfolio process initially in RLS/RTPA 001. Portfolio Development was also included once again in the curriculum for RLS 101/RPTA 101 in 2006-07. As part of RLS 101, students must complete the portfolio to get credit for the class. The
portfolio process is used to measure general student learning outcomes in the following three competency areas: oral skills, written skills and group work. Students must demonstrate, through their course work, the extent to which they can write a formal paper (see attached rubric used for evaluation of student writing; rubrics are also used with oral and group work competencies); the extent to which they can give an oral presentation using powerpoint; and the extent to which they can work as a team member to successfully complete a group project.

For the portfolio, students are also required to submit (1) a mission statement, (2) career goals & objectives, (3) assignments that reflect their competencies within the three areas mentioned above, (4) resume, and if applicable other assignments, letters of recommendation and other awards and scholarship information.

Forty-one students completed the portfolio process for graduation requirements in the 2006-2007 academic year. The instructor of RLS 101 reviews portfolio submissions to verify completion. Faculty feedback was once again given regarding the process. Minor revisions were once again suggested. The faculty is continuing to discuss alternatives to make to portfolio more current, and to meet the career goals of each individual student. Currently, there are 23 students in the process of working on their portfolio. Overall, student work in their portfolios is meeting expectations; while some students had to revise their initial portfolio submissions, all eventually passed.

Beginning in the fall of 2007, we will ask members of our department Advisory Committee to begin reviewing student portfolios and will use their responses to this process to examine and consider revising curriculum as long as the revisions are consistent with NRPA standards.

Ongoing Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes as tied to national standards and competencies – Option 3 (National Accreditation Standards)

Our department offers one degree, Recreation Administration, with two options: Recreation and Park Management and Therapeutic Recreation and is nationally accredited through the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Council on Accreditation. Although our individual concentrations are not accredited, students in therapeutic recreation who want to become eligible to sit for state and national certification must follow an educational plan that is inclusive of standards which are governed by the National Council on Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC). Thus, any curricular changes within the Therapeutic Recreation curriculum are typically in response to NCTRC standards. The only substantive change made to the curriculum during 2006-2007 was a name change to a course to allow students in the TR concentration the opportunity to use this particular class for certification purposes. The TR faculty did discuss the consolidation of courses to reduce overlap between classes and to strengthen the existing TR curriculum. They have also developed a pre and post test instrument to determine which, if any, American Therapeutic Recreation Association (ATRA) core competencies they possess as they enter the program compared
with when the complete their capstone course. This data will be used to influence curriculum changes that will be consistent with NCTRC standards.

Although our students will choose a concentration, every student must take a core group of classes that are composed of standards that reflect 39 distinct competencies that we are required to teach by our accreditation body, the National Recreation and Park Association’s Council on Accreditation. These competency areas include:

**The Professional Competencies:**

8.01-8.05 – Conceptual Foundations  
8.06-8.10 – Leisure Services Profession  
8.11-8.15 – Leisure Services Delivery System  
8.16-8.19 – Programming Strategies  
8.20-8.35 – Assessment, Planning Evaluation  
8.36-8.38 – Legislative and Legal Aspects  
8.39 – Field Work/Internships

All of these competency areas are incorporated into the following core classes:

RPTA – Orientation to Recreation, Parks and Tourism  
RPTA 30 – Recreation, Parks and Tourism in Contemporary Society  
RPTA 32 – Recreation Activity Leadership  
RPTA 42 – Recreation Use of Natural Resources  
RPTA 101 – Senior Seminar (Pre-Internship seminar)  
RPTA 105 – Management of Recreation, Parks and Tourism  
RPTA 106 – Inclusive and Therapeutic Recreation  
RPTA 109 – Computer Applications in Recreation, Parks and Tourism  
RPTA 110 – Research and Evaluation in Recreation, Parks and Tourism  
RPTA 136 – Program Planning for Recreation, Parks and Tourism

Student learning outcomes are identified on all department syllabi, but for the courses listed above, the national competency which is met by a particular learning outcome is also identified.

For example, for RPTA 32, the student learning outcomes are identified below and the numbers in parentheses indicate the national competency which is met by this outcome. At the end of this semester, students will:

1. understand the conceptual foundations of play, recreation and leisure for all populations and settings (8.01, 8.07)
2. understanding play, recreation and leisure from psychological, sociological and physiological perspectives (8.02)
3. understanding the social, political, economic significance of recreation, leisure and play and applying different styles and aspects of being a leader and follower relative to recreation, leisure and play over the lifespan (8.03, 8.04);
4. learn to lead in a variety of settings with different populations based on varying markers of identity (8.12, 8.13);
5. learn and apply role-playing, conflict resolution and problem-solving skills as these issues relate to leadership (8.01)
6. learn and apply techniques to evaluate programs (8.21);
7. learn and apply concepts of organizational behavior; accountability, interpersonal relationship and decision-making strategies (8.30);
8. learn how to conduct trainings and promote programs and services through marketing, public relations and promotions strategies (8.34);
9. learn about service learning and working with recreation-based agencies (8.08, 8.09, 8.10, 8.11, 8.40);
10. learn how to motivate individuals and understanding group dynamics across various groups and in various settings (8.12, 8.13, 8.15, 8.17, 8.18, 8.19, 8.20)
11. understand the importance of and the resources for professional development (8.34, 8.35); and
12. understand the concept and use of leisure resources to facilitate participant involvement (8.16, 8.18, 8.21, 8.23)

Students are assessed and evaluated in all of our courses to ensure their understanding of this material and to ensure compliance with our national standards. All students must complete these courses with a grade of C- or better. Students are constantly evaluated in their courses on these 39 competencies.

Summary

Students in our department are evaluated using nationally sanctioned competencies; and in terms of Therapeutic Recreation we are including a pre and post-test measures; a portfolio process that will now include an external evaluative component; and we have also used student surveys to assess student learning. Any guidance and/or feedback you could provide with regard to strengthening our assessment measures would be very much appreciated.