Program: Master of Science, Recreation Administration

Department: Recreation, Parks and Tourism Administration

Number of students enrolled in the program in Fall, 2011: 20

Faculty member completing template: Greg Shaw (with assistance from Dana Kivel) Date: 01-31-12

Period of reference in the template: 2006-07 to present

1. Please describe your program's learning-outcomes trajectory since 2006-07: Has there been a transformation of organizational culture regarding the establishment of learning outcomes and the capacity to assess progress toward their achievement? If so, during which academic year would you say the transformation became noticeable? What lies ahead; what is the next likely step in developing a learning-outcomes organizational culture within the program?

[Please limit your response to 200 words or less]

The Master’s program in RPTA has undergone several updates and modifications over the last six years. While no formal assessment of the program exist, the program does have several learning outcomes. Additionally, the program meets the requirements of a degree in Recreation Administration in compliance with the NCTRC certification standards for Recreation Therapy. The NCTRC requires that in order to sit for the exam, students must have a degree in an accredited program in Recreation Administration and complete the required certification courses. Students that possess degrees other than Recreation Administration for their undergrad can take the Master’s program and the Recreation Therapy courses and qualify for the NCTRC examination.

The Master’s program has modified its introductory course to better serve students which typically do not have an undergraduate degree in Recreation Administration. More recently (in 2011), the Master’s program has switched to a cohort plan in the hopes of moving students through the program more efficiently. A Comprehensive Examination option was also added in 2011 to better serve working professionals. The program is also currently working developing course that will serve as the program’s graduate writing proficiency course.

The graduate program in RPTA restricted spring admission in 2009 following a university decision to eliminate (or significantly reduce) spring admissions. This action served to greatly reduce the number of students in the program, and there are plans to reactivate spring admissions for RPTA.

2. Please list in prioritized order (or indicate no prioritization regarding) up to four desired learning outcomes (“takeaways” concerning such elements of curriculum as perspectives, specific content knowledge, skill sets, confidence levels) for students completing the program. For each stated
The four learning outcomes listed below are not ranked or prioritized. Nor are they the limit of what we assess. Although the NPRA does not accredit graduate programs, we follow many NRPA outcomes in relation to the Master’s program in Recreation Administration.

**a)** Graduates will have an in-depth understanding of the conceptual foundations of recreation, parks and tourism administration (selected theories, methods, and principles that govern recreation, parks and tourism organizations).

Many students enter the graduate program without a degree in Recreation Administration, but with several years experience in the field. They have gravitated to graduate work for a variety of reasons, often connected with their employment interest. However, with no formal training, students must be given a solid foundation in recreation administration to serve several management formats. As this is a Master of Science, students receive a strong background in management theory and science, as well as a solid foundation in leisure concepts and theories.

Students are assessed using course examinations, term papers, and several practical measures including critical analysis of management plans and issues, trends and problems in the various recreation, parks and tourism industries. Courses: RPTA 200, 202 and 203.

**b)** Graduates will have an in-depth understanding of the significance of recreation, sport and tourism in addressing contemporary societal issues.

Public agencies in many sectors deal directly with societal issues that have become community concerns. Returning US Veterans, a growing underclass, increased diversity and a growing concern for the environment are all areas that professionals in recreation agencies are responsible for. In the private sector, sustainable tourism and environmentally friendly lodging are only two of the areas that professionals must be prepared to deal with.

RPTA master’s students are given a foundation through coursework that prepares them to recognize, diagnose and analyze societal issues related to recreation agencies. The courses are assessed through examinations, critical analysis papers and term papers. Courses: RPTA 200, 202 and 209.

**c)** Graduates will have a solid foundation in the principles and procedures of management (marketing, human resources, finance and budgeting) for recreation, parks and tourism organizations.

Graduate students are expected to understand the advanced issues associated with organizational administration, including legal issues, risk and liability, human resources and grant writing. As funding for agencies is shifted increasingly to the agencies themselves, administrators must be prepared to create and organize funding efforts.

This outcome is measured in classes through grant proposal writing, analysis of financial strategies, term papers and examinations. Courses: RPTA 203, 206 and 207.

**d)** Graduates will understand and have the ability to apply basic principles of research and data analysis related to recreation, parks and tourism organizations.
Research is an essential component to a master of science degree, and the RPTA faculty have identified this outcome as a cornerstone for the graduate program. Students are expected to conduct research and data analysis, and then be able to present findings in both written and oral formats.

The outcome is assessed through analysis of research proposals, term papers and proposal presentations. Course: RPTA 204.

3. For undergraduate programs only, in what ways are the set of desired learning outcomes described above aligned with the University’s Baccalaureate Learning Goals? Please be as specific as possible.

[Please limit your response to 400 words or less]

N/A – Graduate Program

4. For each desired outcome indicated in item 2 above, please:
   a) Describe the method(s) by which its ongoing pursuit is monitored and measured.
   b) Include a description of the sample of students (e.g., random sample of transfer students declaring the major; graduating seniors) from whom data were/will be collected and the frequency and schedule with which the data in question were/will be collected.
   c) Describe and append a sample (or samples) of the “instrument” (e.g., survey or test), “artifact” (e.g., writing sample and evaluative protocol, performance review sheet), or other device used to assess the status of the learning outcomes desired by the program.
   d) Explain how the program faculty analyzed and evaluated (will analyze and evaluate) the data to reach conclusions about each desired student learning outcome.

[Please limit your response to 200 words or less per learning outcome]

This response can be used for all four outcomes of the graduate program.

a) All of the outcomes are assessed through core curriculum assignments. The work received from students is used to determine the effectiveness of the course instruction. Currently, the department does not have an exit examination tool for the graduate program, and very individual natural of graduate theses has not made them conducive to a more organized assessment. It is believed, however, that as more students choose the new Comprehensive Examination option, parts of the exam will be used as an overall assessment of the graduate program.

b) All students must take the core courses of RPTA 200, 202, 203 and 204. In addition, all students take the elective courses of 206, 207 and 209. These courses contain learning objectives related to all of the outcomes used in this report.

c) N/A. No formal assessment instrument used.

d) Department faculty meet annually to discuss the graduate program. Based on student coursework and research, the graduate program has been modified several times. The department is currently designing a new course to assist students with academic writing and writing specifically within the discipline.
5. Regarding each outcome and method discussed in items 2 and 4 above, please provide examples of how findings from the learning outcomes process have been utilized to address decisions to revise or maintain elements of the curriculum (including decisions to alter the program’s desired outcomes). If such decision-making has not yet occurred, please describe the plan by which it will occur. 

[Please limit your response to 200 words or less per item]

This 200-word response can be used for all four outcomes of the graduate program.

The Master’s program has undergone several changes in the past six years. The core coursework has been modified to include a stronger emphasis in legal and budget issues. Both of these changes have been made in relation to the perceived need for greater skill in those areas for students.

Writing has also been a concern. Student writing was determined to be lacking in student ability to conduct research and to organize themes appropriately. In addition, graduate students must now pass the WPG or take an approved writing course at the graduate level. The graduate program is currently being modified to include a new course that will better address the writing issues our students face. The course will teach students the proper organization for written work in our discipline as well as meet the requirements of the graduate level writing course.

To help students move through the program more efficiently, a cohort was put into place beginning in 2011. In this way courses can be offered in sequence. Additionally, the program has modified itself to allow for students to take certain courses in other departments and still meet core requirements.

Finally, the department has plans to re-open spring admission to accommodate more students.

6. Has the program systematically sought data from alumni to measure the longer-term effects of accomplishment of the program’s learning outcomes? If so, please describe the approach to this information-gathering and the ways in which the information will be applied to the program’s curriculum. If such activity has not yet occurred, please describe the plan by which it will occur.

[Please limit your response to 300 words or less]

RPTA has an Advisory Committee of professionals in the various recreation fields, many of which are alumni of the department. The department’s faculty meet three times annually with the Advisory Committee to discuss curriculum, accreditation standards and the specific concerns of the various sectors of the leisure services fields that our students will become employed in. The Advisory Committee review recent curricular changes and also perform a SWOT Analysis with department faculty to determine new directions for the next academic year.

The graduate program has always been included in these discussions, and feedback is then used to help modify graduate instruction to better prepare students to move into the field.
7. Does the program pursue learning outcomes identified by an accrediting or other professional discipline-related organization as important? Does the set of outcomes pursued by your program exceed those identified as important by your accrediting or other professional discipline-related organization?

[Please limit your response to 300 words or less]

N/A: The Master of Science is not specifically accredited by the NRPA.

8. Finally, what additional information would you like to share with the Senate Committee on Instructional Program Priorities regarding the program’s desired learning outcomes and assessment of their accomplishment?

[Please limit your response to 200 words or less]

The graduate program in Recreation Administration is currently restructuring to provide students with courses at a more reliable pace and also allow for students to take some courses in related departments to meet core course needs. These changes are recent (2011-2012) and the department feels that they will make the program more desirable.

In 2009, the department changed the program to fall-only admission. This action was in response to the university’s own efforts to eliminate spring admissions. This unfortunately greatly reduced the number of students in the graduate program. As the university has again allowed spring admissions, there are plans to re-open spring admission for the master’s program, which should improve enrollment.