

## **RECREATION, PARKS, & TOURISM ADMINISTRATION 2006 - 07 ASSESSMENT**

### **Summary:**

During 2006 - 2007, the REC program focused its outcome assessment efforts on retention and graduation rates. The assessment plan included five areas of investigation. These areas were:

- An indirect measure of satisfaction with faculty advising
- A direct measure of students values and ethics
- An indirect measure of students values and ethics

Each area of investigation included either a survey as an assessment tool or an analysis of qualitative data. This report includes an introduction and background of assessment plans since 2003-04, a discussion of each assessment area, and an overall discussion, summary and action plan for the 2006-2007 assessment.

### **Introduction/Background:**

The Recreation, Parks, & Tourism Administration program is accredited by the National Park and Recreation Association. The accreditation process has been a guiding force in the development of the program's curriculum. As the accrediting body, NPRA has developed professional competencies required for entry-level professional positions. The professional competencies have been incorporated into core recreation, parks, and tourism administration courses as primary educational learning outcomes.

The REC program first implemented a formal assessment plan in 2003-04. The 2003-04 assessment employed one direct and two indirect measures. Using a case study approach, the direct measure attempted to assess the students' abilities related to five different educational objectives and/or professional competencies. These five competencies included: (1) ability to develop outcome oriented goals and objectives for individuals and groups, (2) understanding of group dynamics and processes and the ability to use various leadership techniques and strategies to enhance the individual's recreation experiences, (3) understanding of and the ability to analyze programs, services, and resources in relationship to participation requirements, (4) understanding of and ability to promote the agency, the services, and the profession through marketing, public relations, and promotion strategies, and (5) understanding of the principles and practices of safety, emergency, and risk management and the ability to develop and implement risk management plans that assure the health and safety of participants and staff. One conclusion from this assessment experience was that the case study was attempting to measure too many learning outcomes resulting in measurement difficulties and validity issues. It was also recommended that instructors include additional program design principles in REC 205, 252, and 405. Findings of the indirect measures during the pre-internship seminar and during a post-internship questionnaire concluded that students found REC 210, REC 424, REC 360, REC x417 (420), and REC 324 (342) as the most beneficial courses. The students suggested an increased emphasis on corporate events and event planning, outdoor/adventure courses, and marketing

related skills and courses. The post-internship survey indicated that the most helpful courses for internship preparation were REC 305 (350), REC 405, REC 424, and ENGL 310.

The 2004-05 assessment focused on learning outcomes directly related to individual courses as a direct measure, and interviews with REC advisory council members for an indirect measure to ascertain students' educational experiences in the program. One of the direct assessments included an evaluation of the students' ability to write program outcome-oriented goals and objectives. This direct method was conducted in REC 210 during the Fall and Spring quarters. The other direct method was conducted in REC 405 during Winter 2005 to assess the students' understanding of the fundamental principles and procedures of management. The indirect assessment was conducted in the Spring of 2005 when the Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration Advisory Council conducted informal interviews with current students in the program. Students in REC 210 demonstrated the ability to write program outcome oriented goals and objectives. REC 405 students also demonstrated the ability to write goals, but had some difficulty distinguishing between goals and objectives. Organizational structure was also assessed, and the results indicated that further emphasis should be placed on the structure of a non-profit organization and the difference between line and staff positions. The indirect assessment conducted with advisory council members suggested that the students feel that they are well prepared for their future careers. They identified program strengths including the faculty, a sense of belonging, and career preparation. Weaknesses centered on class availability and additional hands-on and network opportunities in lower class levels.

During 2005-06, the REC program emphasized outcome assessment relating to retention and graduation rates to coincide with the university's focus on these issues. Although the program's retention and graduation rates are the highest or near the highest in every category among the College of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) majors, the program desires to continue to improve retention and graduation rates. The assessment plan included five areas of investigation. These areas were: (1) a survey of students who have changed into the REC major to determine why they wanted to pursue REC as a major, (2) a survey of students who have changed out of the REC major to determine their reasons for leaving the major, (3) an assessment of 3-year trends in senior projects to review grades and to determine if a change in grading policy during the 05-06 academic year was having any influence on successful completion of senior projects, (4) an advising survey to evaluate faculty advising, and (5) a survey of senior REC students regarding progress and obstacles towards degree completion.

The 2006-2007 program assessment emphasized further evaluation of faculty advising, as well as developing an understanding of students' ethical principles and professionalism. This assessment was carried out using both indirect and direct measures. Student satisfaction with faculty advising was assessed using an indirect measure in Winter of 2006 using the Zoomerang web survey tool. The data were compared with results from 2005 and 2006 to look for changes in satisfaction. The assessment of students' ethical principles and professionalism was conducted using both direct and indirect measures. In the Spring of 2007, students in REC 205 were asked to respond to this question: "What values do you have – or what is it that you value – that lead you to select Recreation, Parks, & Tourism Administration as your major?" An indirect assessment of students' ethical principles and professionalism was conducted using the Zoomerang web survey tool in the Spring of 2007 in REC 314 and REC 405. The measure was

based on the Ethical Orientation and Awareness of Tourism Students study by Hudson and Miller (2005).

### **Assessment Findings:**

#### **Assessment 1: An advising survey to evaluate faculty advising.**

As a component of the REC program's outcome assessment for the 2006-07 academic year, a survey was conducted to assess the academic advising provided by the faculty. Faculty assume advising responsibilities as a portion of their assignment. Full-time lecturers also take on advising duties and are given assigned time to provide this essential activity. During the 2006-07 academic year, six full-time faculty served as advisors for approximately 300 students enrolled in the major.

A survey was designed using Zoomerang and posted for students to complete. The questionnaire included 15 statements regarding advising using a 4-point Likert scale from 1 strongly disagree to 4 strongly agree. In addition, the subjects were asked about their REC 110 binder usage and NRM office file updates, concentration or advisor approved elective area, gender, and year in school. The web address for the survey was sent to all REC students using the major email list. Ninety-nine useable questionnaires were completed (33% response rate).

Survey results: Of the 99 respondents, 79% were female (n=79) and 48% (n=36) reported they were in their 4<sup>th</sup> year of school (see Table 6). As shown in Table 7, the majority of the students identified their concentration/advisor approved elective area as Special Event Management (n=26, 38.24%) and Tourism Planning and Management (n=12, 17.65%).

Table 1  
Year in School (N=98)

Year	Frequency	%
First	13	13.27
Second	15	15.31
Third	17	17.35
Fourth	41	41.84
Fifth	12	12.24

Table 2  
Concentration/Advisor Approved Elective Area (N=88)

Concentration	Frequency	%
Natural Resources Recreation (Outdoor REC/Eco/Adventure Tourism)	6	6.82
Special Event Management	27	30.68
Sport Management	13	14.77
Tourism Planning & Management	15	17.05
Community Services Management	2	2.27
Minor/ICS	21	23.86
Undecided	4	4.54

Mean scores and frequency/percentage were calculated for each of 15 aspects of academic advising (see Table 3). All scores were between agree and strongly agree. The highest mean scores were for advisor is advisor holds posted office hours (3.60), advisor is knowledgeable about major courses (3.59), and the advisor is available by appointment (3.53). The lowest mean scores were for advisor provides career information (2.95) support for peer advising (2.98), and advisor professional development opportunities (3.13). Table 4 contains the results calculated for the 2005/2006 survey.

Table 3  
Academic Advising – 2006/2007

Item	Mean	“Don’t Know” Frequency	“Don’t Know” %
Advisor holds posted officer hours	3.60	0	0.00
Advisor is available by appointment	3.53	2	2.00
Advisor is knowledgeable about catalog	3.35	2	2.00
Advisor is approachable	3.41	2	2.00
Advisor provides career information	2.95	13	13.00
I support peer advising	2.98	3	3.00
Advisor is knowledgeable about major courses	3.59	2	2.00
Advisor is helpful with concentration courses	3.33	9	9.00
Advisor is knowledgeable about transfer courses	2.95	33	33.00
Advisor provides professional development opportunities	3.13	8	8.00
Advisor responds timely to emails	3.52	6	6.00
Advisor is knowledgeable about graduation requirements	3.48	21	21.00
Advisor responds timely to phone messages	3.22	61	61.00
Advisor is knowledgeable about campus resources	3.25	34	34.00
Advisor is knowledgeable about GE requirements	3.37	8	8.00

Table 4  
Academic Advising – 2005/2006

Item	Mean	“Don’t Know” Frequency	“Don’t Know” %
Advisor holds posted office hours	3.64	2	3.00
Advisor is available by appointment	3.69	4	5.00
Advisor is knowledgeable about catalog	3.58	3	4.00
Advisor is approachable	3.59	0	0.00
Advisor provides career information	3.03	12	16.00
I support peer advising	3.12	2	4.00
Advisor is knowledgeable about major courses	3.74	1	1.00
Advisor is helpful with concentration courses	3.48	10	13.00
Advisor is knowledgeable about transfer courses	3.02	30	40.00
Advisor provides professional development opportunities	3.04	8	11.00
Advisor responds timely to emails	3.61	4	5.00
Advisor is knowledgeable about graduation requirements	3.57	19	25.00
Advisor responds timely to phone messages	3.67	42	56.00
Advisor is knowledgeable about campus resources	3.27	31	41.00
Advisor is knowledgeable about GE requirements	3.40	7	9.00

In an effort to understand differences between study years (2005-2007), ANOVAs (analysis of variances) were conducted (Table 5). A significant difference was found on one advising item. This was “advisor responds timely to phone messages” ( $F=3.425$ ,  $p=0.035$ ). In this case, satisfaction fell from an average score of 3.33 to 3.22 over the three study years. Four items fell below a satisfaction level of 3.00. This was the first year students reported their satisfaction below that level. These items were: “advisor provides career information” (2.95), “I support peer advising” (2.98), and “advisor is knowledgeable about transfer courses” (2.95). Although this difference is statistically insignificant, the difference is important to note. Speculation indicates these differences occurred due to two new faculty advisors for this academic year (2006-2007) and advisor loads increased for some faculty.

Table 5  
Analysis of Variance for Advising Years 2005-2007

Item	<i>df</i>	F	<i>p</i>
Advisor holds posted officer hours	2	.424	.655
Advisor is available by appointment	2	2.789	.063
Advisor is knowledgeable about catalog	2	1.182	.124
Advisor is approachable	2	1.768	.173
Advisor provides career information	2	2.725	.067
I support peer advising	2	1.570	.210
Advisor is knowledgeable about major courses	2	2.091	.125
Advisor is helpful with concentration courses	2	1.049	.352
Advisor is knowledgeable about transfer courses	2	2.853	.060
Advisor provides professional development opportunities	2	1.765	.173
Advisor responds timely to emails	2	.885	.414
Advisor is knowledgeable about graduation requirements	2	.621	.538
<b>Advisor responds timely to phone messages</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3.425</b>	<b>.035</b>
Advisor is knowledgeable about campus resources	2	.021	.979
Advisor is knowledgeable about GE requirements	2	.259	.772

### Assessment 2: A indirect measure of students values and ethics

Students from two classes, REC 314 Travel and Tourism Planning and REC 405 Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management, were asked to complete a web-based survey to assess their ethical orientation toward several different tourism development scenarios. The questionnaire was based on the Ethical Orientation and Awareness of Tourism Students study by Hudson and Miller (2005). Permission to use the instrument was granted by the authors of the study. The scenarios were categorized by their economic, social, and environmental topics and students were assessed according to four separate ethical orientation models (justice, relativism, utility, deontology). The justice orientation is defined as “the equitable distribution of reward and punishment” (p. 387). Relativism is the idea that “there are no universal standards of moral value only cultural norms” (p.387). The utility orientation is the “extent to which an action leads to the greatest good for the greatest number of people” (p. 387). Finally, deontology is defined as “the extent to which an action is consistent with an individual’s duties or unwritten obligations” (p. 387).

The scenarios were entered into the Zoomerang web survey tool. In REC 314, the survey was required as a component of an assignment on tourism planning and development. Principles of planning regarding values and ethics were discussed prior to students completing the assignment. Eighteen responses were from the REC 314 course (100% response rate). In REC 405, the survey was presented to students as an opportunity for extra credit toward their final grade. Eleven students responded from the REC 405 course (35% response rate).

There were six scenarios presented to the students. In each scenario, the students reacted to each scenario on 13 Likert-type scales (Table 6).

Table 6  
Likert-type Scale Regarding Ethical Orientation

Item												
1	Fair (1)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8				(9) Unfair
2	Just											Unjust
3	Morally right											Not morally right
4	Acceptable to my family											Not acceptable to my family
5	Traditionally acceptable											Not traditionally acceptable
6	Culturally acceptable											Not culturally acceptable
7	Produces the greatest benefit to all											Produces the least benefit to all
8	Maximizes benefits while minimizes harm											Minimizes benefits while maximizes harm
9	Does not violate an unspoken promise											Violates an unspoken promise
10	Does not violate an unwritten contract											Violates an unwritten contract
11	I would undertake the same action											I would not undertake the same action
12	My peers would undertake the same action											My peers would not undertake the same action
13	The action is ethical											The action is unethical

The six scenarios were grouped by their areas of concern in the tourism industry: environmental, social, and economic. Scenarios 1 and 5 were social, 2 and 4 were environmental, and scenarios 3 and 6 were economic (see Appendix A for scenarios). The Likert-type items were sorted into the four predetermined categories of ethical orientation (Justice, items 1-3; Relativism, items 4-6; Utility, items 7-8; Deontology, items 9-10). General ethical orientation was assessed with items 11-13. The higher the mean value reported by respondents, the stronger the level of disagreement with the scenario outcomes.

Table 5 illustrates the mean scores for each dilemma by ethical orientation. The most revealing of the results are students' reactions regarding the outcomes of the social dilemmas. In these scenarios, the outcomes favored results that either negatively impacted special populations or marginalized populations with cultural differences. On average, students found these outcomes were just (mean = 4.00) and culturally and traditionally acceptable (mean = 3.77). Their

responses to the outcomes were neutral when they considered the utility (mean = 4.14) and whether or not the outcomes broke unspoken or unwritten promises (mean = 4.32).

The economic and environmental scenario outcomes had slightly more positive responses from students in each of the ethical orientation categories (Table 7).

Table 7  
Mean scores for each dilemma by ethical orientation (N=28)

Scenario	Justice		Relativism		Utility		Deontology	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Economic	5.15	0.80	4.59	0.96	4.80	0.87	5.27	1.02
Social	4.00	1.04	3.77	1.18	4.14	0.96	4.32	1.19
Enviro	5.62	0.96	4.76	0.95	5.28	0.94	4.55	1.07

We recommend a stronger emphasis on ethical and value education on social issues in the Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Administration program. We also recommend increasing the sample size if this study is conducted in future years.

### **Assessment 3: An direct measure of student values and ethics**

An indirect assessment of student values and ethics was conducted in REC 205 Leadership in Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration in Spring 2007. Students were asked to respond to the following question: “What values do you have –or what is it that you value – that lead you to select Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration as your major?” Thirty-two students provided verbal responses to the question, and student responses were grouped into six primary categories as follows:

#### **Value Helping others and Building Positive Relationships**

- Interacting with people (4)
- Helping people have a fun experience (4)
- Helping others (4)
- Social aspect (4)
- A positive experience (2)
- Social skills developed
- Relationships with others
- Kids out of trouble

#### **Value Fun**

- Value of fun (4)



- It's fun (2)
- Fun is more important than money
- Love, fun of the game
- Fun experience
- Fun/together experience
- Smiles

#### **Value the opportunity to work Outdoors**

- Being Outdoors (8)
- Job does not consist of sitting in an office

#### **Value Involvement with Sports**

- Involved with sports (5)
- Independence in sports

#### **Value Variety and Spontaneity**

- Each day is different (3)
- Each event is different
- Spontaneous

#### **Value Health**

- Health (3)

In conclusion, the values of helping others/building positive relationships and having fun were listed most often.

#### **Action Plan:**

- The faculty should continue with the high quality of advising.
- Continue to conduct an advising survey annually to assess faculty advising.
- Conduct a faculty advising survey using both Zoomerang and hard copies of instrument to increase response rate.
- Add item to advising survey regarding frequency of student visits with advisors.
- Reassign advisors based on student concentrations as permissive based on faculty advising loads.
- Investigate the feasibility of a peer-advising program to determine if it would be a viable component of increasing graduation and retention rates.
- Maintain a minimum faculty to student advising ratio of 1:46 as specified in the 1992 NRM MOU.
- Provide an annual training session to advisors to increase faculty knowledge of career advisement and professional development opportunities.

- Provide a career fair for students.
- Direct students to professional development opportunities at the career center.
- Provide faculty training regarding the use of assist.org and courses that transfer from other universities to Cal Poly. Determine the previous universities/colleges of most REC transfer students and create a listing of equivalent Cal Poly courses.
- Assess the need for new articulation agreements between community colleges and Cal Poly for REC core courses.
- Improve retention/graduation rates by following up with students on their graduation evaluations.
- Emphasize and instruct the values and ethics of the field throughout the curriculum.
- Develop and conduct indirect and direct assessments earlier in each academic year.
- Update previously used questionnaires and conduct assessment of students' ability to write program outcome-oriented goals and objectives.
- Update previously used questionnaire and conduct assessment of REC 405 students' understanding of the fundamental principles and procedures of management.
- Analyze internship agency evaluations of student interns' job performance.
- Update previously used questionnaire and conduct assessment of REC senior students' progress and obstacles towards degree completion.
- Continue to maintain open communication with students.
- Participate in the National Survey of Student Engagement.