

# RECREATION, PARKS, AND TOURISM ADMINISTRATION

## 2007-2008 ASSESSMENT REPORT

### **Program Description**

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The Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration (RPTA) Program is housed within the Natural Resources Management Department in the College of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Sciences. The program was initially accredited by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) in 1985 and has been reaccruited in 1991, 1996, 2001, and 2005. Seven full-time and five part-time faculty instruct approximately 300 undergraduates and approximately 15 graduate students.

#### Program Mission, Vision, and Goals

The mission of the RPTA program is to provide a dynamic learning environment dedicated to leadership development and the advancement of knowledge in recreation, parks, and tourism beneficial to individuals, communities, and society.

The RPTA Program is a student focused “Learn by Doing” environment dedicated to:

- Developing students’ full potential
- Teaching and academic excellence
- Lifelong learning
- Leadership development
- Applied research and scholarship
- Environmental stewardship
- Enhancing communities through partnerships, community-based learning and service
- Fostering critical and analytical thinking
- Instilling an appreciation of the Recreation, Parks, and Tourism profession
- Advocating the Recreation, Parks, and Tourism profession’s contributions to quality of life

#### Assessment Plan and Findings

Assessment plan. The RPTA 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, NRPA has developed professional competencies required for entry-level positions. The professional competencies have been incorporated into the core Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration courses as primary educational learning outcomes.

The RPTA Program focused its 2007-2008 outcome assessment efforts on the following areas of investigation:

1. Quality of faculty advising
2. Ethical principles and professionalism,
3. Internship experience and performance,
4. Retention and graduation rates, and
5. Student perceptions of their achievement of NRPA competencies

These areas of investigation meet the following NRPA accreditation standards:

- 5.04:            There shall be ongoing evaluation and development of the student advisory process including academic advising and professional and career advising.
- 8.07            Understanding of ethical principles and professionalism
- 8.29            Internship, full-time continuing experience, in one appropriate professional recreation organization/agency of at least 400 clock hours over an extended period of time, not less than 10 weeks.

### Findings.

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

As a component of the RPTA Program's outcome assessment for the 2007-2008 academic year, a survey was conducted to assess the academic advising provided by the faculty. Faculty (tenure track and full-time lecturers) assume advising responsibilities as a portion of their assignment. During the 2007-2008 academic year, seven full-time faculty served as advisors for approximately 300 students enrolled in the major.

*Instrument description and distribution:* The questionnaire developed for the 2005-2006 assessment process and used in the 2006-2007 assessment process was distributed to RPTA majors using the Zoomerang web survey tool. The web address for the questionnaire was sent to all RPTA students using the RPTA major email distribution list. Paper copies of the questionnaire were also distributed to students registered for spring quarter courses. One hundred and fifty seven useable questionnaires were completed for a 52.3% response rate.

The questionnaire included 15 statements regarding advising using a 4-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree). In addition, respondents were asked about their REC 110 binder usage and NRM office file updates, concentration or advisor approved elective area, gender, and year in school.

Of the one-hundred and fifty seven respondents, 77.7% were female (n=122) and 37.6% reported they were in their fourth year of school (see Table 1). As shown in table 2, the majority of respondents identified their concentration/advisor approved elective area as Special Events Management (n=57, 36.3%) and Tourism Planning and Management (n=24, 13.4%). Fifty nine percent of respondents maintain and update their REC 110 binders quarterly (n=93), and 60.5% (n=95) students do not update their files before they meet with their advisors.

Table 1  
Year in School (n=155)

Year	Frequency	Percentage
First	17	11.0
Second	27	17.2
Third	36	22.9
Fourth	59	37.6
Fifth or more	16	10.2

Table 2  
Concentration/Advisor Approved Elective Area (n=146)

Concentration	Frequency	Percentage
Natural Resources Recreation (Outdoor Rec/Eco/Adventure Tourism)	12	8.2
Special Event Management	57	39.0
Sport Management	21	14.4
Tourism Planning & Management	24	16.4
Community Services Management	3	2.1
Minor/ICS	19	13.0
Undecided	10	6.8

Frequencies, percentages, and mean scores were calculated for each of the 15 aspects of academic advising (Table 3). All scores were between strongly agree (4) and agree (3). The highest mean scores were for “major is knowledgeable about major courses” (3.60), “advisor holds posted office hours” (3.58), and “advisor is available by appointment” (3.53). The lowest mean scores were for “advisor provides career information” (3.0), “advisor is knowledgeable about transfer courses” (3.01), and “I support peer advising” (3.03). Students reported “don’t know” for a number of items related to academic advising. For example, many did not know if their advisor responds timely to phone messages (n=94, 59.9%), “advisor is knowledgeable about campus resources” (n=54, 34.4%), and “advisor is knowledgeable about transfer courses” (n=53, 33.8%).

Table 3  
Academic Advising - 2007/2008 (n=157)

Item	Mean	“Don’t know” Frequency	“Don’t know” %
Advisor holds posted office hours	3.58	2	1.30
Advisor is available by appointment	3.53	5	3.20
Advisor is knowledgeable about catalog	3.33	3	1.90
Advisor is approachable	3.45	3	1.90
Advisor provides career information	3.00	22	14.00
I support peer advising (N=156)	3.03	13	8.30
Advisor is knowledgeable about major courses (N=156)	3.60	6	3.80
Advisor is helpful with concentration courses	3.41	15	9.60
Advisor is knowledgeable about transfer courses	3.01	53	33.80
Advisor provides professional development opportunities (N=156)	3.16	23	14.60
Advisor responds timely to emails (N=156)	3.47	13	8.30
Advisor is knowledgeable about graduation requirements (N=156)	3.48	39	24.80
Advisor responds timely to phone messages (N=155)	3.20	94	59.90
Advisor is knowledgeable about campus resources	3.27	54	34.40
Advisor is knowledgeable about GE requirements (N=156)	3.42	12	7.60

The 2007-2008 data were cross-tabulated with the 2006-2007 (Table 4) results in order to compare student opinions about RPTA faculty advising (see Table 5).

Table 4  
Academic Advising – 2006/2007

Item	Mean	“Don’t know” Frequency	“Don’t know” %
Advisor holds posted office 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

Table 4 (continued)

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 (N=157)	3.37	8	8.00

In an effort to understand differences between study years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, a One-Way ANOVA was conducted (Table 5). A significant difference was found on one advising item: “advisor is knowledgeable about catalog” ( $F=3.279$ ,  $p=0.039$ ). In this case, satisfaction fell from an average score of 3.35 (2006-2007) to 3.33 (2007-2008). Three items increased from below a satisfaction level of 3.0 from 2006-2007 to 2007-2008. These items were “advisor provides career information” (3.00), “I support peer advising” (3.03), and advisor is knowledgeable about transfer courses” (3.01). These items had fallen below the 3.0 satisfaction level between 2005-2006 and 2006-2007.

Table 5  
Analysis of Variance for Advising Years 2005-2008

Item	<i>df</i>	F	<i>p</i>
Advisor holds posted office hours	2	0.421	0.657
Advisor is available by appointment	2	1.907	0.151
<b>Advisor is knowledgeable about catalog</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3.279</b>	<b>0.039</b>
Advisor is approachable	2	0.704	0.495
Advisor provides career information	2	0.255	0.775
I support peer advising	2	0.266	0.767
Advisor is knowledgeable about major courses	2	0.187	0.830
Advisor is helpful with concentration courses	2	2.043	0.131
Advisor is knowledgeable about transfer courses	2	2.042	0.131
Advisor provides professional development opportunities	2	0.073	0.929
Advisor responds timely to emails	2	0.177	0.838
Advisor is knowledgeable about graduation requirements	2	0.274	0.761

Table 5 Continued

Advisor responds timely to phone messages	2	0.655	0.520
Advisor is knowledgeable about campus resources	2	1.943	0.145
Advisor is knowledgeable about GE requirements	2	0.561	0.571

Results indicate an overall improvement in RPTA advising of undergraduate students. Although one item saw a decrease over the study years (advisor is knowledgeable about catalog), the difference did not indicate a significant decline in the quality of this service.

Many respondents reported that they did not know whether or not their advisor responded timely to phone messages, was knowledgeable about campus resources, or was knowledgeable about transfer courses. Regarding advisor responses to phone messages, students increasingly use email rather than telephones as a means of communicating with their advisors, either to arrange advising meetings or to ask questions. This may explain the high percentage (nearly 60%) of students not knowing if their advisors respond timely to phone messages. A minority of students in the RPTA program are transfer students, explaining the high percentage (34%) of students who do not know if their advisors are knowledgeable about transfer courses. Many students reported they did not know if their advisors were knowledgeable about campus resources (34%). This may indicate that students consult with their advisors about curriculum during advising meetings and seek out other sources of information regarding campus resources.

#### *Assessement Area 2: An indirect measure of student values and ethics*

Students from two classes, REC 313 (Sustainable Tourism) and REC 314 (Travel and Tourism Planning) 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 this 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 obligation” (p. 387).

The scenarios were entered into the Zoomerang web survey tool. In REC 313 and 314, completion of the questionnaire was required as a component of an assignment on

tourism planning and development. Principles of planning regarding ethics and values were discussed prior to students completing the assignment. There were six scenarios presented to the students. In each scenario, students reacted to each on 13 Likert-type scales (1=outcome was judged positively, 7=outcome was judged negatively). See Table 6 for a description of the scales.

Table 6  
Likert-type Scale Regarding Ethical Orientation

Item									
1	Fair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	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. 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.

Tables 7 and 8 illustrate the mean scores for each dilemma category by ethical orientation. Although, on average, students rated the outcomes above the midpoint of 3.5 on the 7-point scale, the students rated the social items closer to this midpoint than either the environmental or ethical scenarios. The economic and environmental scenario outcomes had slightly more positive responses from students in each of the ethical orientation categories.

Table 7

Mean scores for each dilemma by ethical orientation (N=24), REC 313, Fall 2007

Scenario	<u>Justice</u>		<u>Relativism</u>		<u>Utility</u>		<u>Deontology</u>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Economic	5.25	1.09	4.85	0.83	5.03	0.75	5.06	1.08
Social	3.92	1.05	3.76	0.85	4.16	0.84	3.83	1.14
Enviro	4.72	0.76	5.83	0.76	5.15	0.86	4.28	1.20

Table 8

Mean scores for each dilemma by ethical orientation (N=31), REC 314, Spring 2007

Scenario	<u>Justice</u>		<u>Relativism</u>		<u>Utility</u>		<u>Deontology</u>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Economic	4.87	0.95	4.67	0.93	4.42	0.99	5.04	1.23
Social	3.72	1.09	3.45	0.82	3.72	0.99	3.88	1.30
Enviro	5.67	1.31	4.37	1.16	5.35	1.22	4.63	1.41

Means from the two quarters were compared using an independent sample t-tests. Significant differences between the quarters were found on environmental relativism



( $t=-3.202, p=.02$ ), environmental justice ( $t=5.388, p<.000$ ), and economic utility ( $t=2.518, p=0.015$ ). Scores on the environmental relativism scenarios increased between the two quarters, indicating students in the REC 314 course perceived the outcomes to be less traditionally or culturally acceptable than students in the REC 313 course. Conversely, scores on environmental justice and economic utility decreased. Students perceived the outcomes of those scenarios to be more just (environmental), or maximizing benefits (economic) than the previous quarter.

Results indicate the need to maintain a focus on the values and ethics of students in the RPTA program. A students' ethical orientation is informed by many factors, including the professional principles of their field. Therefore it is necessary to communicate those principles through both conceptual and practical delivery systems.

### *Assessment Area 3: An indirect measure of internship experience and performance*

As a component of the REC 465 internship requirements, students are evaluated by their agency supervisors both at the mid-point and end of their internship experience. Agency supervisors evaluate the interns on a number of different categories. A total of 40 interns were evaluated for the 2007-2008 academic period. For the purposes of this assessment cycle, two categories were selected: professional performance and professional personality and attitude. These categories are measured by seven items (five on professional performance, two on professional personality and attitude). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1=rarely, 5=always), with an option for "not applicable." Interns scored highly on all items, however two items stand out as receiving somewhat lower ratings: "displays ability to lead and direct" (3.28), and "displays knowledge and understanding of human behavior" (3.68). See tables 8 and 9 for a full explanation of these results.

Table 8  
Mean Scores of Intern Professional Performance in REC 465.

Evaluation Item	Mean	N/A Freq.	N/A %
Displays ability to solve problems (N=39)	4.21	0.0	0.0
Displays ability to lead and direct	3.28	6.0	15.0
Possesses strong communication skills	4.30	0.0	0.0
Displays knowledge and understanding of human behavior	3.68	5.0	12.5
Displays ability to integrate conceptual knowledge and activity skills	3.85	2.0	5.0

Table 9  
Mean Scores of Intern Professional Personality and Attitude in REC 465.

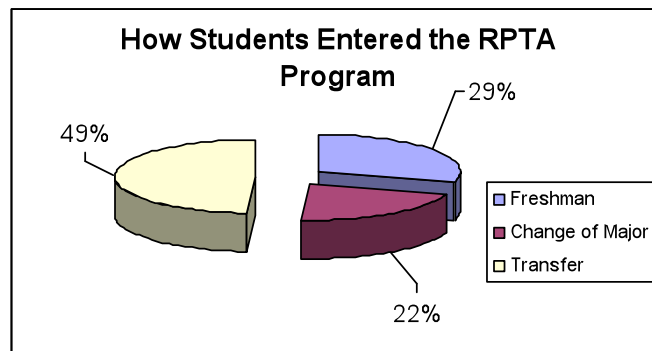
Evaluation Item	Mean	N/A Freq.	N/A %
Possesses effective written communication skills	4.03	3.0	7.5
Possesses effective oral communication skills	4.15	1.0	2.5

Because internship experiences for REC students vary from concentration to concentration, as do opportunities to utilize skills like leadership or ability to integrate conceptual knowledge, it is difficult to draw concrete conclusions from this data. However, a suggestion can be made to enhance classroom activities designed to foster students' ability to integrate conceptual knowledge and activity skills, for example.

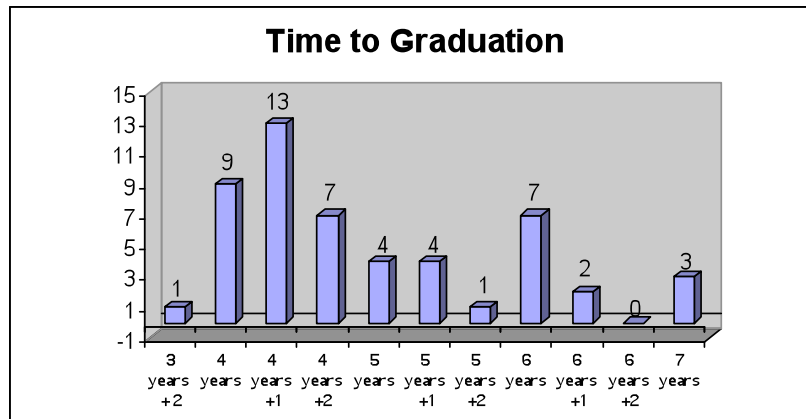
#### *Assessment Area 4: Retention and Graduation Rates*

In order to assess the obstacles that slow progress toward graduation as well as the resources or factors that help students progress toward graduation, all RPTA senior standing students were asked to complete an electronic questionnaire during the 4<sup>th</sup> week of spring quarter. Fifty students responded to an 18-item questionnaire that was divided into four sections: respondent characteristics, respondent satisfaction, obstacles, and resources.

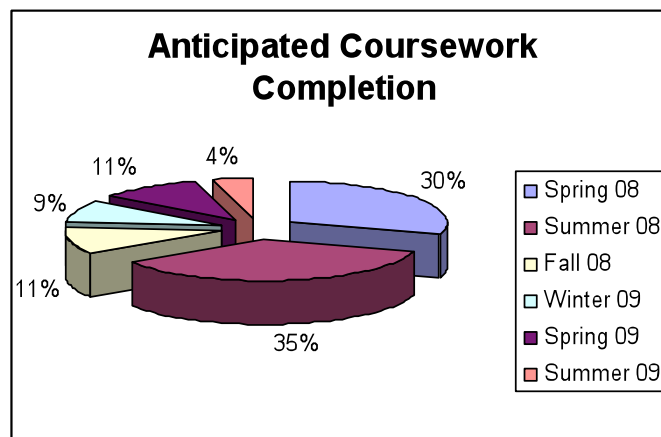
Respondent characteristics. Students were asked to provide information on their status when they entered the RPTA program, their anticipated time to graduation, their anticipated coursework completion, and their concentrations. See figures 1 through 4 for a complete description of the results.



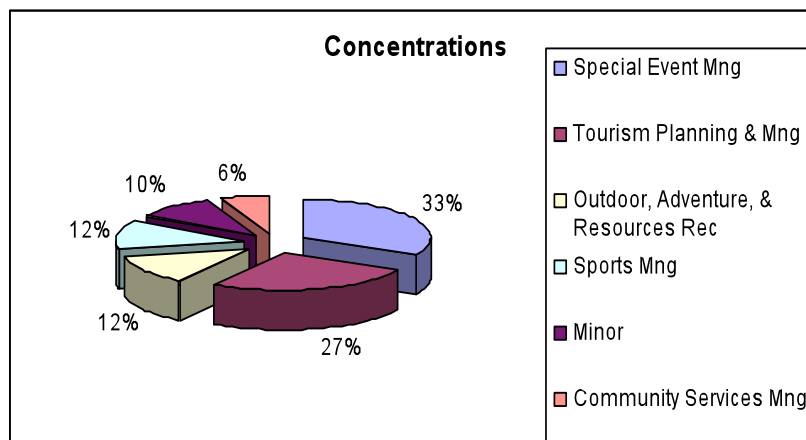
**Figure 1. RPTA Students' Status When Entering RPTA Program**



**Figure 2 RPTA Students' Anticipated Time to Graduation**

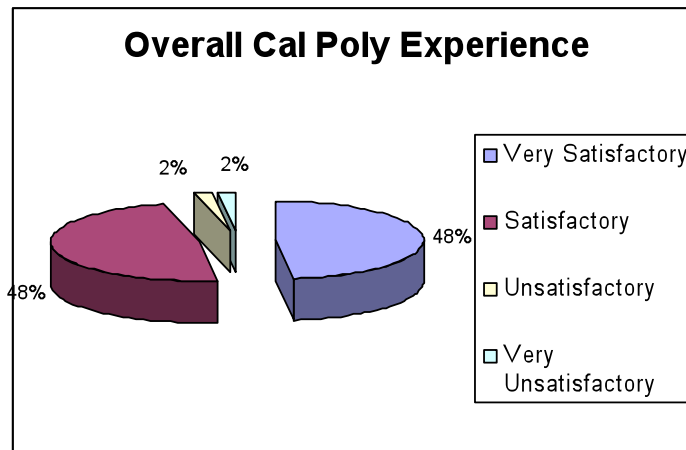


**Figure 3 RPTA Anticipated Coursework Completion**

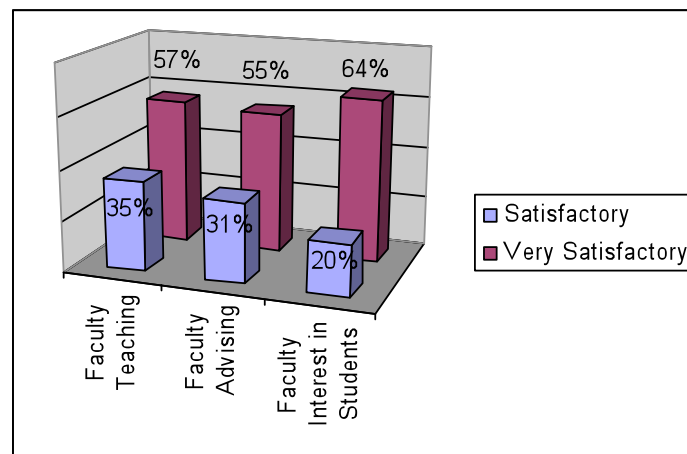


**Figure 4 RPTA Concentration by Percentage**

Participant Satisfaction. Respondents were asked to report on both their overall satisfaction with their Cal Poly experience as well as their satisfaction with faculty teaching, advising, and interest in students. Overall, RPTA students were either satisfied (48%) or very satisfied (48%) with their Cal Poly experience (see Figure 5). A majority were also satisfied with faculty teaching, advising, and interest in students (see Figure 6).



**Figure 5. RPTA Students' Satisfaction with Overall Cal Poly Experience**



**Figure 6. RPTA Students' Satisfaction with RPTA Faculty**

Perceived obstacles toward graduation. Students were also asked to report on factors they perceived slowed their progress toward graduation. Thirty-seven percent of students named class scheduling and availability as a major obstacle toward graduation. Students also mentioned “balancing school and work,” (13%), dissatisfaction with the quality of advising (13%), and “accommodating a study abroad experience” (10%). It is important to note that 88% of RPTA students worked during the school year while at Cal Poly.

Resources for progression toward graduation. Eighty percent of students mentioned the RPTA faculty as their greatest resource toward graduation. Specifically, they mentioned “guidance, enthusiasm, helpfulness, friendliness, and encouraging.” Students also

mentioned their faculty advisors (50%) and the REC 110 Course Binder (14%) as resources that helped them progress toward graduation.

Based on this assessment, the RPTA program should continue to explore options that could improve course scheduling and availability for students. The RPTA program should be mindful of creating scheduling conflicts with RPTA program courses. The two most difficult REC classes for students to register for were REC 110 and REC 252, with 20% and 18% finding these courses either Very Difficult or Difficult to register for respectively. However, the majority of the issues surrounding course scheduling and availability are outside of the control of the RPTA program, due to the limited availability of classrooms on campus and due to the fact that the most difficult course for students to register for, ENG 310, is outside of the RPTA program. 41% of the students participating in this assessment found it either Very Difficult or Difficult to register for ENG 310.

RPTA faculty should continue to prioritize relationships with students. It is evident that positive, enthusiastic, helpful and encouraging faculty are valued by the participants in this study, and recognized as factors that have helped students progress toward graduation. It is interesting to note how many students identified RPTA faculty advising and the REC 110 course, Career Planning in Recreation, Parks, and Tourism, as key resources. RPTA faculty should maintain their commitment to excellent student advising.

*Assessment Area 5: Student perceptions of their achievement of NRPA competencies*