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STEPS TO BE TAKEN TO STRENGTHEN THE
PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION PROGRAMS IN COMMERCIAL RECREATION

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ABSTRACT

It is necessary to alter your program as the profession responds to changes. This article recommends a system for upgrading the program.

STEPS TO BE TAKEN TO STRENGTHEN THE
PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION PROGRAMS IN COMMERCIAL RECREATION

There are many commercial recreation programs at colleges and universities across the country and many more will soon follow if present trends in the job market and recreation education continue. Dr. Jack Samuels pointed out in his article "Jobs In Unexpected Places, A Pattern For The 80's," "the experience and training of the professional recreator is being recognized as appropriate for a growing number of employment situations."(1, p.53) As our graduates move into these commercial recreation positions we need to strengthen professional preparation programs to insure that graduates are well prepared to succeed on the job. Richard Howell stated in his article on "Tourism and Recreation Curricula," "we need a curriculum that would teach an appreciation of the total profit-social motivation spectrum."(2, p.35)

In addition to the overview courses in commercial recreation and travel and tourism that many schools offer, students are often required to take a number of upper division courses outside of their major. These courses can broaden the students background in their chosen emphasis area and strengthen their academic credentials. The following steps can help recreation educators identify academic courses which will be valuable to students who are interested in a career in commercial recreation.

The first step is to identify the commercial recreation jobs that graduates are getting in your geographic area. Educators also need to identify the job opportunities which students may overlook. A check of Dr. Samuels "Nontraditional Career Opportunities in the 80's" may help.(1, p. 54-55) This step is important because in addition to the fitness centers, theme parks, and sports clubs found nationwide there are regional differences in commercial recreation job opportunities. For example, the northeastern and western states have numerous ski resorts,

the south has its famous beach resorts and the northeast corridor has a large concentrated population that needs a variety of recreation services. It is possible that your area has a large number of job opportunities in a specific type of commercial recreation such as resort management, theme parks or tourism.

The second step is to identify the skills and qualifications needed for employment. There are some common competencies that pertain to most commercial recreation positions. Skills in public relations, marketing and office management would be useful in many commercial recreation job positions. However, because of the possible regional differences in job opportunities, you may find that your students require some particular skills to qualify for job opportunities.

The third step in the plan is to identify the educational resources that are available at your school. Since the educational programs at your school may not offer the particular competencies that students require, consider offering these courses in-house. Another consideration will be the number of outside courses students are allowed to take.

An example of possible courses that could help commercial recreation majors are: (1) business related courses in management, marketing, basic accounting and office management; (2) hotel and restaurant courses in accommodations management and food service; (3) journalism courses in public relations, news writing, and photography; and (4) physical education courses in facility management and exercise physiology.

The courses that students take should be tailored to both the existing and future job market in your area and the student's interests. Recreation educators need to be sure that graduates are well prepared to capture the potential large commercial recreation job market.