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SMOKY MOUNTAINS RECREATION CONSORTIUM (SMRC)

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the development of a conference to exchange ideas among faculty and students in universities. The evolution of the organization is one of growth through sharing.

SOMKY MOUNTAINS RECREATION CONSORTIUM (SMRC)

The Smoky Mountains Recreation Consortium (SMRC) is entering its third year after a budding start in 1981 and full blooming in 1982. The SMRC draws together faculty, students, and professionals from a variety of recreation, tourism, and resource management disciplines to create an appealing educational environment outside the classroom.

Nurtured from an idea of Dr. Ken Krick of the University of Tennessee (UT), Knoxville, the SMRC began through a joint effort between the UT Division of Recreation and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), Recreation Resources Program. TVA provided technical assistance in organizing and administering the first SMRC in hopes that the consortium would eventually become a self-operating entity with a core group of universities working together year after year in planning and conducting the SMRC.

According to Dr. Krick, "The consortium concept is a means of injecting creativity and fun into the learning process. It provides an opportunity for individuals with diverse backgrounds to address problems and issues of mutual concern. Specific topics and problems are selected to provide in-depth knowledge related to the theme of the consortium. Students and faculty alike assess the quality of speakers and topics."

The consortium's objectives are as follows:

1. To provide an educational environment in which students can gain proficiencies and knowledge they may not be able to acquire in the classroom;
2. To develop a knowledge of the design, operation, and administration of outdoor recreation facilities; and
3. To enrich the student's recreation curriculum by association with students from other universities, specialized instruction, and association with professionals from various public and private agencies.

The SMRC extends the learning environment beyond the traditional four walls of the classroom and facilities bridging the gap between philosophical theory and practical application. It is interesting to observe students challenging fellow students, faculty, and keynote speakers. The dialogue between participants is definitely one of the most valuable aspects of the consortium.

The setting for the first SMRC was Wesley Woods United Methodist Church Camp in Townsend, Tennessee. Utilizing the resources of local, state, and federal agencies, the consortium addressed the theme of Resource Management. Forty students and faculty from Clemson University, Michigan State University, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Bowling Green State University, and UT spent five days together learning, developing friendships, and recreating.

The second SMRC conducted in 1982, attracted representatives from nine universities and colleges to address the theme of commercial recreation and tourism. The theme of the 1982 SMRC was a significant shift from the 1981 resource management theme; however, the flexibility within the organizational framework of the consortium allows the theme to change from year to year to meet the needs of students and faculty.

Major highlights from the previous consortia include visits to the 1982 World's Fair, Silver Dollar City theme park, area recreation attractions in Gatlinburg, and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Personnel from the U.S. Corps of Engineers, the National Park Service, TVA, the States of Georgia and Tennessee, and numerous public recreation departments, private recreation enterprises, and related professional trade organizations have participated in the SMRC.

Students indicate the consortium affords them an opportunity to view first hand what the "real world" is like by exploring areas they may not have been exposed to in the classroom. "The opportunities for dialogue with private and public managers of a variety of recreation

resources are too good to pass up," says one 1982 SMRC student. The concentration of study and leisure pursuits, combined with a short-time period and a majestic setting produce an ideal learning experience. It also offers an opportunity for prospective employers to acquaint themselves with potential employees or interns.

In addition to the universities mentioned earlier, participants have come from Georgia Southern College, Virginia Commonwealth University, Ferrum College, University of South Alabama, and Montclair State University.

Plans for the 1983 SMRC are well underway. The consortium will be held September 9-14 at Wesley Woods. Commercial recreation will again be the theme due to its significance in today's leisure industry and the student's demands for current information. The approximate cost, which includes lodging, meals, tours, snacks, recreation, certificates, and t-shirt, is \$85.00. Persons interested in more information should contact Dr. Ken Krick, UT, Department of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, 1914 Andy Holt Avenue, Knoxville, Tennessee 37916, telephone (615) 974-5111.