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A SOUTH CAROLINA RECREATION, TRAVEL AND TOURISM INSTITUTE

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ABSTRACT

Recreation, Travel and Tourism is among the two top industries in the State of South Carolina. The Institute of Recreation, Travel and Tourism at Clemson University was created in 1985 to provide the coordination and foster cooperation for this important industry. The Institute exists not only for research efforts but for educational and public service ventures as well. This article describes the objectives, the organization, the evaluation process, and the future outlooks for this Institute.

A SOUTH CAROLINA RECREATION, TRAVEL AND TOURISM INSTITUTE

The recreation, travel and tourism industry is one of South Carolina's most economically significant industries performing remarkably well even under recent bleak economic circumstances. The state's and region's endowment of natural resources and man-made service facilities comprise most of the basic resources required to meet the demands of a growing market.

According to the State Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, travel in South Carolina represents:

- * The second largest retail industry in the State.
- * \$2.6 billion in domestic and international spending; some 19 percent of the net taxable sales.
- * The employment of 68,000 South Carolinians (about 5.9 percent of the nonagricultural work force) at every level of skill, and indirect production of perhaps 13,000 more supporting jobs.
- * \$476 million a year in wages and salaries; \$210 million a year in federal, state and local tax income.
- * A highly diversified industry, composed primarily of small businesses, adding to the quality of life

for visitors and residents, as well as to the economic well-being of the State.

For all its benefits, recreation and tourism can bring problems--if growth is not carefully planned and managed. States with high levels of tourism development accomplished with little or no forethought are belatedly recognizing the need for appropriate recreation and tourism development strategies and assistance. For this reason a coordinating institute was proposed and established at Clemson University to foster cooperation between interested parties within the State and region.

PURPOSES AND OBJECTIVES

The Institute was proposed in 1984 and created in November of 1985 as a focal point for coordinating research, extension, and teaching programs related to recreation, travel and tourism within the state of South Carolina. The very electric nature of the industry mandated that cooperative efforts be undertaken to draw together the many disciplines and interests necessary to fully effect positive outcomes. The proposed purposes of the Institute were (1) to assist South Carolina in maintaining and expanding its tourism and recreation industry; (2) to provide coordination in the sound development of tourism and recreation resources; and, (3) to enhance the visibility of this geographic area for attracting funds from what could be considered as non-traditional sources for Institute efforts. The Institute is primarily concerned with providing a stimulating interdisciplinary environment for projects related to recreation and tourism. More specifically, five objectives emerged for the Institute:

- A. To act as a coordinator of a reservoir of talent which may be called upon when there is a need for individuals with specialized training pertinent to recreation and tourism;
- B. To identify and develop a broad tourism and recreation research base and to serve as a vehicle for assisting faculty at South Carolina institutions of higher education in obtaining research funds;
- C. To cooperate with other State divisions conducting research or extension programs related to recreation and tourism so that the total Institute accomplishments can be maximized;
- D. To work with Clemson University's Cooperative Extension Services in conducting and further developing public service programs concerning recreation and tourism; and,
- E. To suggest guidelines and assist in the development of high quality training for tourism personnel in South Carolina.

The objectives were drawn so that the Institute would not be solely a research center, but would also have a role in education and public service activities.

The Institute was designed to assist all interested personnel in obtaining support for their recreation and tourism involvement. All types of research, extension and teaching related to recreation and tourism were considered to be legitimate Institute activities. The Institute was proposed to assist and coordinate programs only for those desiring such functions. It was not meant to impose these functions if they were not wanted by a particular agency or group.

ORGANIZATION

The Recreation, Travel and Tourism Institute at Clemson University, South Carolina, consists of a director and two advisory committees--a Program Support Committee and a Technical Support Committee. The director serves primarily in a coordinating role, but is also directly involved as an active project member when appropriate. Staff support is provided by the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management.

The Program Support Committee includes distinguished members of government and private industry who can assist in identifying industry/government/local needs in the field, and in making contacts and securing funding for Institute projects.

The Technical Support Committee is comprised of faculty from across the Clemson campus with expertise in a wide variety of disciplines which can be brought to bear on problems confronting government, industry and local communities. This committee can also advise the director on the appropriateness and feasibility of undertaking specific projects.

The institute currently receives no annual appropriations from the state government for its operations. The Director's salary and minimal clerical support are provided by the department in which the Institute is housed. Other expenses are absorbed directly by charges for services or projects.

PROJECTS

The Institute has had some success in accomplishing projects for the state of South Carolina. Examples of projects completed or in progress since the 1987-88 fiscal year include:

* "Beach Users Survey: Hilton Head Island, SC" sponsored by the Town of Hilton Head Island.

* "Clemson Visitor Profile Study" sponsored by the Clemson Area Chamber of Commerce, SC.

* "Tourism Impacts on Beaufort County, SC" sponsored by SC Sea Grant Consortium.

* "NTF College Identification Project" sponsored by the National Tour Foundation.

* "Post-Labor Day School Opening in South Carolina: An Impact Study" sponsored by the SC Travel & Tourism Forum.

* "Outdoor Recreation Resource Planning for Military Installations" sponsored by the National Park Service.

These show the diversity of effort undertaken, especially in the research area. Little has been done yet in the area of public service or education functions.

EVALUATION

It has been suggested the Institute be evaluated on several criteria. As the Department and the University continuously review Institute programs, external reviews will occur at intervals of seven to ten years. The three major criteria which will be considered for reviews follows:

1. The Projects Undertaken and Completed:

Evaluation will consider the number of projects sought, the number attempted and the number brought to successful conclusion. It is expected that at least three projects will be undertaken the first year with at least five annually thereafter. Under this evaluation item the amount of scientific output and the number of presentations and other successful information dissemination mechanisms will be considered.

2. The Institutions or Agencies Involved:

If the Institute is to meet one of its primary goals of coordination of effort, personnel from a diversity of organizations and disciplines must be involved. This diversity should be evidenced through perusal of Institute records.

3. Funds Generated:

It would be expected the Institute could show evidence that its personnel have been successful in attracting project funds from sources external to state appropriations.

The initial evaluation will be conducted four years after the establishment of the Institute. Perhaps seven year evaluation cycles will then be appropriate.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Recently a group of some 20 centers and institutes in both Canada and the United States similar in purpose to the Clemson Recreation, Travel and Tourism Institute agreed to an informal networking system to address mutual problems and to share appropriate information toward the enhancement of the recreation, travel and tourism industry across North America. For many of these institutes, the future is still uncertain. While the need has been demonstrated, acceptance and full utilization are yet unproven, and perhaps never will be. At least the institutes are functioning and accomplishing activities of a cooperative nature. Perhaps the most promising aspect is that they exist, and therefore demonstrate some recognition of the need for cooperation and knowledge in these unique fields of endeavor.