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CONTENT ANALYSES OF CURRENT INTRODUCTORY
COMMERCIAL RECREATION COURSES

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ABSTRACT

Commerical Recreation course offerings continue to grow in the recreation and leisure studies curricula throughout the country (Kelly, 1990). As colleges and universities respond to the burgeoning demand for trained professionals, some analyses and evaluation of specific courses may provide meaningful insight to current academic perceptions concerning professional preparation. Crossley and Makieson (2) called for "a well balanced academic curriculum" (p. 294) while Bullaro and Edginton (1) advocated "an overhaul of college and university leisure studies curricula to reflect changes in the employment market" (p. 92). Yet, how can a balanced curricula be determined, or a curricula overhauled, until some baseline data has been established?

The purposes of this study were to analyze course content from introductory commercial recreation or leisure enterprise offerings and determine the degree of communality between courses from various colleges and universities. The 79 National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) accredited colleges and university recreation and leisure service departments or programs were contacted by telephone in the Spring of 1989 and Fall of 1990. Current course syllabi were requested from any department which offered an introductory commercial recreation course.

Information given in course outline, content, description, objectives and requirements were tabulated as responses to open ended questions.(5) Word and concept coding procedures were applied to identify meaningful categories for interpretation. Of the 79 institutions contacted, 54 offered one or more courses and 22

institutions did not offer any courses in commercial recreation. Of the 54 institutions which offered commercial recreation courses 46 provided syllabi for review which represents an overall 85% return rate.

A majority (over 56%) of courses included the following eight categories: legal issues; marketing; financing; types of commercial recreation; nature/overview/ scope of commercial recreation/ career/employment opportunities; starting a recreation business; and trends in commercial recreation. Communnality decreased rapidly with the ensuing 58 categories scoring between 41 to 2 percent.

The findings of this study identify a combination of business and traditional recreation topics are included in introductory commercial recreation courses. The emphasis is overwhelmingly (61%) business related content. Interestingly, few courses included topics on Professional Associations, Computer applications, Ethics, or Individuals with Special Needs. Additional research and discussion is needed to refine the integration of business and recreational related topics. The continued review of the commercial recreation field by educators and practitioners will ensure the development of courses designed to prepare future professionals for a rapidly changing society and career.

CONTENT ANALYSES OF CURRENT INTRODUCTORY COMMERCIAL RECREATION COURSES

INTRODUCTION

The continued growth of commercial recreation curricula at colleges and universities and the information that is taught in these courses will play a critical role in determining the future direction of the profession. The recreation and leisure services profession is defined by educators who disseminate and create knowledge, as well as practitioners who develop and apply this knowledge in the business setting.

The ability of colleges and universities to successfully meet this burgeoning demand for trained professionals is directly related to their curriculum offerings. Bullaro and Edginton (1) have advocated "an overhaul of college and university leisure studies curricula to reflect changes in the employment market" (p. 92). How can changes be made until a baseline of information has been established? Identifying colleges or universities which have commercial recreation offerings and analyzing the content of their introductory courses provides meaningful insight to current academic perceptions concerning professional preparation.

The need for a "well balanced academic curriculum in commercial recreation" was proposed by Crossley and Makieson.(2, p. 294) Suggested coursework in commercial recreation would include an overview of the nature of commercial recreation, major components of the industry, and business concepts which apply directly to the commercial leisure environment. Kelly (3) states that "although the preparation requirements for recreation business opportunities are not yet agreed on, there is agreement that the new entrepreneurs in recreation business

should be grounded in both the fundamentals of recreation and business" (p. 319). What are these components or fundamentals? What agreement if any, is there by other academicians in identifying key elements of a commercial recreation curriculum offering?

The purposes of this study were to analyze course content from introductory commercial recreation or leisure enterprise offerings and determine the degree of commonality between courses from various colleges and universities. The continued evolution of the commercial recreation field depends on the ability of the academic institutions to provide the critical training and education necessary. Therefore, it behooves us to ensure that a consensus exists concerning what key factors or critical components are being included in specific commercial recreation courses.

METHODOLOGY

The 79 National Recreation and Park association (NRPA) accredited college and university recreation or leisure service departments or programs were contacted by telephone in the Spring of 1989 and Fall 1990. Current course syllabi were requested from any department or program which offered an introductory commercial recreation course.

Information given in course outline, content, description, objectives, and requirements were tabulated as responses to open ended questions (i.e., what should be taught in an introductory commercial recreation course)? Labaw (5) states "Open ended questions are indispensable to a thorough understanding of complex issues and topics" (p. 132). This method allows meaningful interpretation of complex but apparently single issue questions.

Word and concept coding procedures were applied to identify meaningful categories for interpretation. Categories were analyzed and averages computed for communality with introductory commercial recreation syllabi from other colleges of universities.

RESULTS

Of the 79 institutions contacted, 54 offered one or more courses in commercial recreation (see Table 1), 22 institutions did not offer any course in commercial recreation (see Table 2), all institutions were contacted a minimum of three times by telephone. Only one institution refused to participate. Of the 54 institutions that offered introductory commercial recreation courses, 46 provided syllabi for review. This represented an 85% overall return rate.

A total of 66 word and concept categories were identified for analyses. A majority (over 56%) of courses included the following eight categories: legal issues, marketing, financing, types of commercial recreation, nature/overview/scope of commercial recreation, career/employment opportunities, starting a commercial recreation business, and trends in commercial recreation. Communality decreased rapidly with the

following 58 categories scoring between 41 to 2 percent.

DISCUSSION

Even though individual courses covered a wide range of topics from legal aspects to volunteerism, high levels of agreement in several topic areas were obvious. The inherent mission of the educational process is to integrate conceptual and practical applications in the professional training process. In the area of commercial recreation, a background in business related concepts and leisure topics form the foundation for any introductory level course.

The blend of business and recreation concepts determines the direction of the future professionals growth. This study indicates that the content emphasis is currently on business concepts such as marketing, feasibility, financing, legal organization, starting a business, consumer behavior, personnel management and promotion. The relatively low scores for computer application (26%), professional associations (17%), ethics (10%), and assessing special population needs (2%) identifies a potential weakness in the current course content. Can the future professional afford to be computer illiterate, uninvolved in professional organizations, indifferent to society's ethics or indifferent to individuals with special leisure needs? These specific topics should be emphasized in any introduction to commercial recreation course.

Several caveats engendered by the research design were obvious. Are syllabi truly representative of what is taught in the course? What emphasis or amount of time is spent on any particular topic identified in the syllabi? These questions cannot be answered from this study. However, these results provide a strong indicator of the professional background and training that educators recognize as necessary for students to succeed in the commercial recreation field. As this field continues to grow, efforts are increasing to standardize the profession through examination, certification, and accreditation procedures. Therefore, should be as educators not start by developing consistency in the curricula and course content.

Additional research and discussion is needed to refine the integration of business related topics and the traditional recreation and leisure service subjects. The continued review of the commercial recreation field by educators and practitioners will ensure the development of courses designed to prepare the future professional for a rapidly changing society.

REFERENCES

1. J. J. Bullaro and C. R. Edginton, Commercial Leisure Services, MacMillian and Company, New York, New York, 1986.
2. J. C. Crossley, and L. M. Jamieson, Introduction to Commercial and Entrepreneurial Recreation, Sagamore Publishing Company, Champaign, Illinois, 1988.
3. J. R. Kelly, Leisure, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1990.
4. R. Kraus, Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society, Scott, Foresman/Little, Brown, Glenview, Illinois, 1990.
5. P. Labaw, Advanced Questionnaire Design, Abt Books, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1980.

TABLE 1

 INSTITUTION OFFERING INTRODUCTORY COMMERCIAL RECREATION COURSES

Cal State Polytechnic University-Pomona	Southwest Missouri State University
Cal Polytechnic State U-San Luis Obispo	University of Missouri-Columbia*
Cal State University-Chico	State University of N Y-Brockport
Cal State University-Northridge	East Carolina University
Cal State University-Sacramento	North Carolina State University
San Diego State*	University of N Carolina-Chapel Hill
San Jose State	University of N Carolina-Greensboro
Colorado State University-Ft. Collins	University of Carolina-Wilmington
Georgia Southern	Oklahoma State University
University of Idaho	University of Oregon
Eastern Illinois University	East Stroudsburg University*
Illinois State University	Pennsylvania State University
Southern Illinois University	Slippery Rock State University
University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign	Temple University
Western Illinois University	Clemson University
College of St. Francis	University of Tennessee-Knoxville
Indiana State University	University of Utah
Indiana University*	Ferrum College
Iowa State University	Radford University
University of Iowa	Washington State University*
Eastern Kentucky University	West Virginia University
University of Maine*	University of Wisconsin-Madison*
University of Maryland	University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse
Springfield College	
University of Massachusetts	
Central Michigan University	
Michigan State University*	
Mankato State University*	
University of Minnesota	
University of Southern Mississippi	

* denotes institutions which did not participate in the study.

TABLE 2

INSTITUTIONS NOT OFFERING COMMERCIAL RECREATION COURSES

Gallaudet University
Florida State University
University of Florida
University of Georgia
University of Northern Iowa
Kansas State University
University of Kentucky
Grambling State University
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
University of Nebraska-Omaha
University of New Hampshire
New York University
York College of Pennsylvania
Brigham Young University
Lyndon State College Longwood College
Virginia Commonwealth University
Old Dominion University
Virginia Wesleyan
Eastern Washington University
Western Washington University
West Virginia State College

Statements given in individual syllabi were word coded, then concept coded into categories for comparison purposes. Agreement in categories were computed using percentages (see Table 3). The range of scores for each category were between 2 and 80 percent.

TABLE 3

CONTENT CATEGORIES IN INTRODUCTORY COMMERCIAL RECREATION COURSES

BUSINESS TOPICS	%	RECREATION TOPICS	%
Legal Issues/Organization	80%	Nature/Overview/Scope of CR	71%
Marketing	80%	Career Employment	64%
Financing/Fiscal Mgmt.	78%	History of CR	36%
Types of Commercial Rec.	78%	CR Organization Mgmt.	36%
Starting a Business	58%	Definition of CR	28%
Trends	56%	Professional Associations	17%
Tourism/Hospitality	41%	CR Enterprise Evaluation	15%
Feasibility Study	41%	Demand for CR	13%
Consumer Behavior/Psych	39%	Leisure Service Product	13%
Travel Industry	36%	Local CR Enterprise	10%
Promotion	36%	Community Needs Assessment	8%
Personnel Management	36%	Industrial Recreation	4%
Entrepreneurial Profile	36%	Economic Aspects of CR	4%
Free Enterprise System	28%	CR Experience	4%
Advertising	28%	CR Problems	2%
Computer Applications	26%	Volunteerism	2%
Contracts	26%	Youth Agencies	2%
Risk Management	23%	Church Rec.	2%
Programming	21%	Assessing Special Pop. Needs	2%
Public vs. Private Rec.	21%		
Business Plan	21%		
Franchising	19%		
Planning	19%		
Problems & Strategies	19%		
Facility Management	17%		
Insurance	17%		
Publicity/Media	17%		
Govnmt. Role/Taxation	15%		
Impacts/Social Econ/Env	15%		
Capital	15%		
Pricing	13%		
Profit/Cost	13%		
Ethics	10%		
Mgmt. Skills	10%		
Technology	8%		
Product Development	8%		
Intrapreneur	8%		
Market Research Techniques	8%		
Participant/Expenditure	6%		
Consumer Loyalty	6%		
Retailing	6%		
Credit/Collection	4%		
Community Relations	4%		

Small Business Environment	2%
Business Intelligenece	2%
Selling	2%
Resume	2%
