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TRAVEL INDUSTRY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM:  
CONCORD COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT

This article tells This story of This initiation of an educational program and defines its role in the future development of the profession.

TRAVEL INDUSTRY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM:  
CONCORD COLLEGE

In 1978, Concord College, a four year liberal arts teacher education institution in Southern West Virginia, established a new course of study designed to prepare students for entry level management positions in travel and leisure related businesses, organizations, and public agencies. This new program, still the only one of its kind in the state, was designated The Bachelor of Science in Travel Industry Management. Since its inception, the program has become one of the most popular on campus, and now boasts approximately 150 majors in a student population of 2000.

The popularity of the Travel Program appears to stem from several factors. One of the most important is the fact that Concord's degree offers a number of educational options from which students may choose in fulfilling their degree requirements. These options take the form of five concentrations or areas of specialization within which students may pursue segments of the travel and leisure industry and include: (1) Lodging Management, (2) Food and Beverage Management, (3) Park and Resort Management, (4) Travel Service Management, and (5) Tourist Development Planning and Promotion.

The structural arrangement of the Travel Management curriculum into five elective fields of specialization permits each student to pursue his or her own broad career interests. However, personal choice is not restricted to five areas of study as the structural organization may suggest. Each concentration is in fact a broad subject-matter area which includes many specialized fields, any one of which a given student can pursue if he or she chooses to do so. This added flexibility is achieved through a judicious mixture of group and individual learning. Instruction in the basic concentration courses seeks to educate the student in the practices, procedures, and activities common to the concentration field as a whole. Advanced seminars, independent study courses, directed readings, and a field internship provide the opportunity for still further specialization based upon specific student interests.

A second basis for the popularity of Concord's Travel Program - perhaps as important as the first - is the breadths of training acquired even by those who eventually pursue a very narrow specialization within a concentration area. Graduates of the program, whatever their

chosen career fields, have a working familiarity with the other facets of the travel and leisure industry. This familiarity is achieved primarily through a basic core program, certain common course requirements among the concentrations, and an internship served in a travel or leisure business. The core program, which is required of all students prior to their entry into the concentrations, contains courses from each concentration area. Although these courses do not generate the level of expertise the student will acquire in his or her specialization, they do result in a depth and breadth of knowledge that many professionals lack outside of their own fields, even after some years of experience.

Common course requirements within the concentrations also generate a familiarity with non-specialty facets of the industry. These common requirements are of two types. Some are from fields with which the future travel or leisure professional will have regular contact. For example, a prospective park manager is required to take advanced courses in food and lodging as a part of his concentration. The other common courses are from the fields of marketing and business management, whose principles are applied in all facets of the industry.

Finally, the Travel Industry Management internship serves to further enhance the broad knowledge of the Travel Management graduates as well as the specialization knowledge. Students who participate in this optional learning experience normally serve a period of one semester in businesses or agencies representing their areas of specialization. The emphasis during this experience is on increasing the general and specific knowledge of the student in his or her field while permitting each student to observe and experience the common ground between seemingly distinct fields.

The structure and operation of Concord's Travel Industry Management Program reflects the Travel Management faculty's perception of the major issues facing the educator in this field in the upcoming decade. The major issues, at least from the small college perspective, can be simply stated. They are: (1) to develop and maintain a high quality educational program; (2) to attract a sufficient number of high quality students to that program; and (3) to provide them with the knowledge and skills they will require to succeed in their chosen fields, that success to be measured in the degree to which they achieve their own personal goals, and also in the degree to which they meet society's needs.

Though easily identified and simply stated, the issues or challenges facing the educator in the travel and leisure field are not likely to be easily resolved. The development and maintenance of a high quality program presents many problems, particularly for the small college. Restrictions on funding for new faculty positions, for faculty growth and development, and for other educational purposes, promise to become more severe, at least for the foreseeable future. Consequently, it will become more difficult to strengthen existing programs, either by adding additional faculty or by upgrading existing ones. Limitations on library acquisitions, on instructional supply and equipment purchases, and on other essential expenditures will add to the problem of quality in the educational process. The challenge, it appears, will be to do a better job with the resources we now have.

Attracting high quality students to the program in sufficient numbers to maintain the integrity of the program and ultimately to supply the growing demand for travel and leisure professionals promises to be equally challenging. Though experts disagree, the evidence suggests that the available pool of college age youth is growing smaller. Moreover, it is clear that competition for that dwindling "resource" is becoming stiffer. While this is a concern primarily for educational institutions at the present time, it is a problem that the travel and leisure industry as a whole must inevitably confront at some point in the future.

As noted, the third major issue of concern to the travel and leisure educator is the challenge of preparing students for success in their chosen fields. Obviously, this is a challenge that faces any educator, whatever the field he or she represents. However, it promises to be especially difficult for travel and leisure professionals, as these activities come to occupy a larger and more significant part of people's lives.

These, then, are some of the major issues facing the travel and leisure industry, as viewed from the small college perspective. Concord College has attempted to address these issues through the structure and operation of its Travel Industry Management Program. Time will measure its success.

#### COMMENTS

An unsuccessful program does not really fail because it opens the way to improvement, stimulation, change, and challenge. It provides an added insight to future selections of programs, their leadership and procedures to follow. After each undertaking, we should analyze the reasons for success or failures and apply them to our philosophies in the future.

Follow-up with appropriate persons can result in more sales and better customer satisfaction.