

Recreation, Park and Tourism Administration

Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Administration, College of Education and Human Services



Program of Study

The Recreation, Park and Tourism Administration (RPTA) curriculum is designed to prepare students for the many phases of the profession. We emphasize innovative instructional techniques and learning experiences through application of knowledge and skills in career-related settings. Noted authorities are invited to campus regularly for lectures and special programs, and students travel to various recreation, park and tourism agencies for observations and direct experiences.

Because the RPTA program is a nationally recognized and highly respected program, it has been named a Signature Academic Program, and is one of only 12 programs on campus to achieve this recognition.

Faculty

RPTA faculty members have diverse interests and experiences. Coupled with a sensitivity to student needs, this provides an excellent climate for learning. The majority of the faculty hold doctoral degrees from institutions across the United States and Canada, such as the Universities of Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maryland and Minnesota; Texas A&M; and the University of Waterloo–Ontario in Canada.

Scholarships

The RPTA department currently offers several scholarships and awards to its majors, several of which are named after RPTA faculty emeriti. Other scholarships are available to our students from several outside agencies, such as the Illinois Park and Recreation Association, the National Recreation and Park Association, the Illinois Tourism Council and a variety of park districts and other agencies throughout the state. Contact the RPTA office, (309) 298-1967, for more detailed information about department scholarships. Additional scholarship information is available from the Scholarship Office, (309) 298-2001, or at wiu.edu/Scholarship.

Honors in RPTA

To be eligible for the Centennial Honors College, entering freshmen must have an ACT composite score of at least 28 OR have a 26 or 27 composite ACT and be in the top 15 percent of their graduating class OR have an ACT composite score of at least 24 and be in the top 10 percent of their high school graduating class. A comparable SAT score is acceptable. Transfer and current WIU students who wish to join the Honors College (including the Quad Cities Honors Program) must have a 3.4 grade point average on a 4.0 scale based on 12 or more semester hours. Honors credit is given for honors coursework completed at other accredited institutions. To find out more, visit wiu.edu/Honors. In the RPTA major, honors students take courses for honors credit, and, as seniors, they prepare an honors thesis under the direction of the department's Honors adviser.

Horn Field Campus

Western's 92-acre Horn Field Campus, one mile south of Macomb, is operated by the RPTA department as a laboratory for courses in camping, outdoor education, resource management, interpretation, leadership and adventure education.

Student Activities

RPTA majors who qualify may apply for membership in Rho Phi Lambda, an honorary fraternity for outstanding majors in recreation, park and tourism programs. The department also offers students the opportunity to become involved in a variety of organizations such as the RPTA Student Recreation Society (SRS), the department professional organization; H.E.L.P. (Horn Environmental Learning Project), an organization dedicated to maintaining Horn Field Campus while learning about resource management; Student Therapeutic Recreation Society (STRS), an organization for students with an interest in working with special populations; Student Commercial Recreation and Tourism Society (SCRTS), an organization for students to network with faculty and alumni in the commercial area of recreation and tourism; and the Student Outdoor Recreation Society (SORS), a club that enjoys hiking, kayaking, rock climbing and other adventure activities.



Special Opportunities

- Students graduating with a Bachelor of Science in recreation, park and tourism administration are immediately eligible to sit for the examination to become a Certified Park and Recreation Professional and thereby acquire this valuable credential for professional advancement. Successful completion of prescribed courses in therapeutic recreation results in eligibility to sit for the examination to become a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist.
- Nonprofit education and certification is available and leads to careers with organizations such as YMCA, Junior Achievement, Campfire, Big Brothers and Big Sisters and others.
- The department is a member of a consortium in outdoor recreation, which meets annually in the spring at the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont, TN.
- Each winter, the department invites camp directors to campus for the annual Summer Camp Job Fair. Students from all majors are interviewed for summer camp employment.
- ECOEE (Environmental, Conservation, Outdoor Education Expedition) emerged in 1976 as a semester-long professional in-the-field experience. It deals with principles of leadership, conservation, camping, wilderness trip leadership, adventure education and outdoor education. The ECOEE experience is part of the outdoor leadership minor that is open to all students on campus.
- Each spring, the department sponsors the Professional Development Conference during which alumni of the department return and present seminars on topics that are purposeful for young professionals.
- The RPTA department also offers travel workshops, which are opportunities for students to gain additional learning, skills and professional preparation broadly in the field. The travel workshops are scheduled throughout the year and vary with each course in terms of credit available.
- Students are required to do a 12-week internship that may occur during the fall, spring or summer. Students research, interview and select, along with the internship coordinator, an appropriate site. In addition to the site supervisor, each student will be assigned a faculty supervisor to work with during the internship.
- The department has a very active alumni association that supports the curriculum through presentations, visits to campus, scholarships and investment opportunities to continue the tradition and legacy for future generations.
- Many distinguished alumni serve as mentors to RPTA students.
- The department offers study abroad opportunities to Spain and cruise ships in the Caribbean Sea.

After College

Professional careers in recreation and leisure services offer challenging, meaningful and highly rewarding opportunities. Whether your interests are in working with children, teens, adults or seniors; with outdoor adventure, cultural arts, sports or events; or in hospital/clinical settings, theme parks, tourism or the military, recreation and leisure services offer job opportunities for you.

For More Information

The department welcomes visitors. Call the RPTA department chair at (309) 298-1967 or e-mail the department at rpta@wiu.edu to set up an appointment. You can also learn more about the department by visiting our website at wiu.edu/rpta.

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