

**Recreation, Parks, and Tourism  
Program Outcomes Assessment Project  
Executive Summary**

**Stage 1: Designing and Proposing a Learning Outcomes Project**

This program outcomes assessment project assessed the degree of mastery of program outcomes and student learning through the use of course-embedded assignments. The following program outcomes were assessed: 1) Apply positive leisure knowledge, skills, and abilities to balance life and career experiences; 2) Apply group dynamics and processes and the ability to synthesize various leadership techniques and strategies to enhance the individual's recreative experiences; 3) Assess, plan, implement, and evaluate leisure activities in three or more programmatic areas; 4) Utilize the tools of effective oral and written communication, including public speaking skills, professional and scholarly report preparation, and computer literacy, e.g., word processing, spread sheets, slide show presentations, and specialized computerized programs related to leisure services; 5) Promote, advocate, interpret, and articulate the concerns of leisure service systems for diverse populations and services.

Several assessment instruments from three different classes were used to collect the data. External validation was conducted by using long-standing professionals from the Recreation, Parks, Tourism, and Leisure Services industry and the CCBC Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Advisory Board to review and provide feedback on the assessment instruments. Evaluators who are experts in the field evaluated papers, presentations, and portfolios using specially constructed rubrics for each project. The process involved a multi-year format with two main evaluations periods.

**Stage 2: Implementing the Design and Collecting and Analyzing the Data**

The first assessments were done in fall 2004 and spring 2005. The assessed projects were the Leisure Resources Inventories and the final Philosophy papers (RECR 101), the final Issues/Concerns term paper and the Case Study presentations (RECR 231), and the portfolios from the RECR 173/RECR 273, Directed Field Experience class.

For the Philosophy papers and the Leisure Resources Inventory, most of the mean scores for the six criteria assessed were in the 3 to 4 range on a 6-point rubric, indicating that the scores were at or approaching the benchmark score of 4. Scores ranged from one semester to another, and this difference was attributed to different scorers versus significantly different levels of student performance. Areas of strength included content, communication, critical thinking, and independent learning, and areas for improvement included technology as a learning tool and cultural appreciation. The Case Study scores resulted in an overall success rate of 79%, indicating that a large majority of students mastered the outcomes of the Professional Foundations of Leisure Services course that were assessed via that project. There was a lower success rate based on the scores of the Issues/Concerns term paper, which showed a 58% success rate. The Portfolio scores, the culminating project for the program, showed a 76% success rate.

### **Stage 3: Redesigning the Course to Improve Student Learning**

Specific recommendations were determined to strengthen student performance in each of the courses included in the study, with detailed recommendations for using each assignment as a more effective teaching/learning tool. All recommendations were adopted in time for the second round of assessment. In addition, the Program Coordinator determined that it is critical to use the same external evaluators each time the papers are assessed to increase reliability.

### **Stage 4: Implementing Course Revisions and Reassessing Student Learning**

The second assessments were conducted in fall 2006 and spring 2006. Results were consistent with the first set of data, with some important improvements, indicating that some of the interventions are making a very positive difference, yet there is still room for further growth, with continued emphasis on the areas previously indicated as needing improvement. Case study presentation scores improved from 79% to 81%. Issues/Concerns paper scores improved from 59% to 75%. Portfolio scores increased from 76% to 83%. Additional recommendations for the future include the following: increase emphasis on the leisure needs and concerns of diverse populations; assess students' writing skills early on in the program and assess periodically to determine if/when improvement occurs and if skills meet identified standards; continue to reinforce information literacy skills, including the use of technology as a learning tool.

### **Stage 5: Final Analysis and Reporting Results**

There is clear evidence that the students enrolled in the Recreation, Parks, and Tourism are mastering the outcomes of the program. As with any assessment project, areas of strength and weakness were identified. Most of the recommendations implemented resulted in improvements that were at or above the benchmark. Upon review of the second round of assessment data, additional interventions were recommended and have been put into place. Assessment will continue to be an ongoing component of the evaluation and improvement of the Recreation, Parks, and Tourism program.