

Academic Program Review SUMMARY*

Department under review <u>Recreation Management and Therapeutic Recreation</u>	
Date self-study received in Dean's office	May 30, 2008
Date of external consultant's review	October, 2007
Date APR received report	November, 2008
APR'S summary of self-study <i>(first two boxes must be completed)</i>	
<p>APR's summary of how the academic program attempts to reach its goals and objectives and the extent to which those goals and objectives have been achieved.</p> <p>The Recreation Management and Therapeutic Recreation (RMTR) Department, under the College of Science and Health at UW-L, has identified multiple goals and objectives, including goals related to the university, for the department, and for each degree within the department, as well as objectives for student learning. The primary goal of the program is to provide a "highly respected education program that is student-centered" and leads to degrees within recreation. The department also lists goals specific to each degree, describing specialized professional knowledge for each. Overall, the department is focused on professional preparation of students.</p> <p>The department attempts to reach these goals by maintaining high academic standards, continuing to seek and receive prestigious accreditation and support of its programs, offering continually-updated and comprehensive curriculum tailored to each specialization, requiring extensive and closely-overseen internships and thesis projects, encouraging students to complete national certification, and hiring and retaining effective teachers with appropriate certification and academic credentials.</p> <p>The department is extremely successful in creating professionally-focused, nationally-accredited, specialized degree programs which prepare students for employment and leadership in the field of recreation today and in the foreseeable future.</p>	
APR's comments including: Notable Strengths	
<p>RMTR boasts a extensive list of notable strengths. The department offers an impressively broad spectrum of degrees constituting a list of two undergraduate majors, three minors (including one specifically tailored to complement a major within the department), and two distinct graduate programs. The notable variety of programs possibly results from stability resulting from the long institutional history of the department, which offered its first degree in 1960 and its first graduate degree in 1978. This early start allowed RMTR to carve a unique role for itself in the state and region, boasting the only accredited recreation degree for undergraduates in the state of Wisconsin. The RMTR department also displays impressive responsiveness to professional developments, developing a (possibly nationally-unique) minor in Inclusive Recreation, emphasizing environmental education, developing a course in response to an aging population, and responding to new developments in curricular design in comparable programs. Multiple components of the department indicate a focus on pre-professional development for students, which results in successful placement in career positions – approaching 90 and 100% placement rates for the undergraduate and graduate programs. The department also displays a commendable</p>	

commitment to close mentoring of students, offering advisement for its students “at a level greater than that of other programs across campus.” Finally, all of the above strengths rest upon the presence of an experienced and credentialed faculty.

Notable Weaknesses

While it is not quite correct to call it a weakness, there is one clear difficulty which is created by the department’s breadth of degree offerings, specialized curriculum, and commitment to mentoring: it is difficult to fulfill the curricular requirements of multiple degrees with the existing number of faculty. Although the external reviewer and the dean’s comments both note that departmental staffing is comparable to the rest of the college, it is nonetheless true that the large number of different courses necessary for distinct programs, combined with a commitment to one-on-one mentoring and significant internship oversight requirements, may stretch existing faculty thin, and pressure exists to attract, retain, and expand the number of tenure-track faculty with a terminal degree. Within the limitations of college and university budgets, it may not be easy to maintain the high level of success within the department, requiring continued “herculean” efforts on the part of faculty and staff, as noted in the self study.

RMTR has also had difficulty in meeting its commitment to encouraging increased faculty research output and visibly demonstrating the existing professional involvement of current faculty. With the extensive teaching and advising demands necessitated by departmental commitments, it appears to be difficult to adequately support scholarly research.

APR comments on any/all of the six specific components of the self-study (if applicable)

Self Study: Purposes

The department’s mission statement is “to provide a highly respected education program that is student-centered and leads to a baccalaureate or master’s degree in Recreation Management or Therapeutic Recreation.” The department also outlines goals and philosophies for each major, minor and program; these individually support and amplify upon the department’s goal. These programs are:

Recreation Management Graduate
Therapeutic Recreation Graduate
Recreation Management Undergraduate Major
Therapeutic Recreation Undergraduate Major
Recreation Minor
Inclusive Recreation Minor

Additionally, within the Recreation Minor, there is currently a “Recreation Minor for Therapeutic Recreation Majors,” an option which offers a slightly altered curriculum for those specific students, but is not significantly different from the existing Recreation Minor.

RMTR does an excellent job of highlighting components of the System and Core mission statements which guide the department; in the future, the new UW-L Select mission statement should be included in this section.

Self Study: Curriculum

RMTR’s curriculum is typical of similar programs across the nation, except where it exceeds the minimum requirements of accrediting bodies, particularly in the Recreation Management

undergraduate degree. As that program is a part of the small percentage of all such programs accredited by the National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA), it emphasizes more management and business knowledge and thus allows graduates to immediately take national certification exams. The Therapeutic Recreation program follows guidelines from both the NRPA and the National Council of Therapeutic Recreation. Unique or outstanding features include the fact that the program is a major and not an emphasis, offering extensive courses unique to the program, including a nationally-unique course in "Therapeutic Recreation and Corrections." Both of the graduate programs offer the choice of either internships or the completion of a thesis or project for completion.

Extensive guidance from a large number of professional organizations and certifying bodies keep the curriculum in a state of constant evolution, changing to meet new emphases in the field, including child life and outdoor pursuits.

All undergraduate majors and minors have minimum GPA requirements for entrance or maintenance, except for Inclusive Recreation. The two majors have minimum total credit hours of 120 and 125, while the minors have minimum total credit hours of 19 and 21. On this, the RMTR's response to the question in II(c)2 of the self-study might require clarification. The directions are to offer a justification if the minimum credits required exceed 120. RMTR offers an explanation of why the average number of credits at graduation on the Unit Data Sheets are greater than the 125 listed, but no justification as to why the number of credits required by the department – 125 – is 5 greater than 120. In discussion with George Arimond, current department chair, two responses to this concern were offered: first, that a pre-professional major may require additional contact time between students and the professional community than other programs, thus justifying additional minimum contact hours, and that second, revisions of the program subsequent to the self study, and approved by the Registrar in May of 2009, have already altered the minimum credit hours for the degree, possibly mooted this concern.

Self Study: Assessment of Student Learning & Degree of Program Success

The department has compiled extensive and varied assessment mechanisms in most of its programs, though less attention has been paid to the minor degree programs. Recreation Management students are assessed by professional practitioners during their internship project, and data from this assessment, as well as other instruments devised for Therapeutic Recreation students, are compiled and considered by the department in curricular design. The self study indicates that the department has clear goals for student learning, and regularly assess teaching content, syllabi, and student learning. There is significant emphasis on assessing writing within the Therapeutic Recreation program.

All programs in the department emphasize, with great effort of individual faculty, one-on-one advising and mentoring of students, through a variety of different initiatives.

Of particular note here is the significant indicators of program success – as a department focused on pre-professional education, the department has demonstrable success in placing its graduates in positions within the field, a track record of above-average performance on certification examinations, and overall student success.

Self Study: Previous Academic Program Review and New Program Initiatives

Within the RMTR's summary of responses to previous academic reviews lies a significant concern about maintaining a high quality of instruction in the face of increasing enrollment

demands and a decreased number of full-time, tenure-track faculty. This concern is quantified by measurement of SCH/IFTE, the student/teacher ratio in recreation internship courses, and measurement of total number of students enrolled. In many instances, this concern is identified as the limiting factor in existing course offerings, the development of future course offerings include online counterparts for graduate courses, and the limited release time or other support for applying for grants to support curricular development.

Self Study: Personnel

The department and the University both offer support and opportunities for professional development, although the department's allotment of travel money was recently reduced from a higher level to bring it in line with other departments. RMTR places a high emphasis on teaching within the tenure and promotion process, with scholarship a close second, and the department offers guidance on expected scholarly production. The department hopes to reach a level of 11 or 12 FTE in the next several years.

As noted above, the commitment to continuing to offer a large number of degree programs and intensive advising and mentoring with a limited number of tenure-track faculty has made it difficult to reach SCH/IFTE goals. It should be noted that the department appears to be completing its goals with the absolute minimum of required resources; any further shortfall in resources would necessarily result in a negative impact on course and degree offerings.

Self Study: Support for Achieving Academic Program Goals (Resources)

Shortly after the completion of the self study, RMTR's offices and classrooms were moved from Wittich Hall to the Health Science Center, though students and faculty continue to use physical training facilities across campus. This move has improved previously-problematic constraints on space and facilities. RMTR also has significant costs associated with maintaining recreation equipment. The department also must fund travel for faculty assigned to oversee student internships at regional educational institutions and other sites up to 250 miles away, which strains the departmental budget.

RMTR has a 37hour/week ADA, a 20 hour/week LTE, and student workers. Six faculty members have partial administrative appointments to oversee academic programs. These staffing arrangements are commensurate with needs and comparable to other programs.

External Reviewer Recommendations

APR's Comments on External Reviewer (if applicable)

- A significant concern of the external reviewer, the Council of Accreditation of the National Recreation and Parks Association, is listed as "Standard 4.08" in the October 2007 report. This standard reads "There shall be evidence of continuing scholarly productivity by academic unit faculty serving the curriculum, consistent with the institution's mission." This is the only "Unmet Standard" in this accreditation review. By explanation, the external review notes that "Faculty are not engaged in continuing scholarship productivity compared to their college peers" and that the University's longstanding commitment to teaching as a primary goal of the institution has left a legacy of "not supporting research at the current level of expectations."
- In response to Standard 4.08, the department may be able to simply raise the visibility of scholarly work within the department, creating an atmosphere that highlights and encourages future work. The department may consider creating department-designed webpages for every faculty member, using the shared UWL template, and highlighting publications and professional activities of faculty members. Similarly, the department might

- highlight future scholarly work in SAH newsletters or other publications.
- Standards 5.01 (“There shall be a formal ongoing process of student involvement in those aspects of the academic unit that affect their professional preparation”) and 5.06 (“There shall be evidence of ongoing student involvement in professional organizations and activities”) are both listed as “Partially Met.” The external reviewer notes that “There is no formal ongoing process for student involvement” and “Most students are not professionally involved.” In summary, the accrediting agency noted that students were insufficiently involved in both departmental planning and in professional organizations.
 - Accessibility concerns related to the location of a Wittich hall 3rd floor office, and a suggestion of ADA signage on first floor, is no longer applicable, as the entire department is now housed in Health Science Center; that concern should be considered resolved.
 - External reviewer concerns about standard 9D.04 –“Understanding of the roles, functions, and trends in health and human service agencies and the role of therapeutic recreation in these settings” – within the curriculum appear to be minor, and have already been addressed.
 - The external reviewer expressed concern about redundancy of material within both the Recreation Management and Therapeutic Recreation. In its response, RMTR argues that any possible repetition existed only in the RM curriculum, as the material in question was intentionally revisited and necessary for certain sequential [i.e. prerequisite] courses.
 - RMTR should be aware that the Council of Accreditation for the NRPA has produced new 2013 Accreditation Standards, to which the department must adhere if their next reaccreditation site visit is after January 1, 2013. If the next five-year external review happens, as scheduled, in 2012, RMTR may choose to be reviewed under either the 2004 or 2013 standards. Even if the department chooses to be reviewed under the 2004 standards, planning should nonetheless include awareness of these evolving standards for future program development. Consultation with Chair George Arimond indicates that the department has this planning well in hand, as evidenced in existing strategic plans.

Department’s response to the Reviewer Recommendations

APR’s Comments on the Department’s Response (if applicable)

- The departmental response to concerns from the accreditation review and the Dean about the relative level of scholarly productivity within the department are logical, meaningful and appropriate. As the responses listed – including clearer guidance on goals, seeking new faculty with active research agendas, and offering a competitively rewarded release time for research – will take some time to result in increased scholarly productivity, no further action is required at this time.
- The departmental response to accrediting review of Standard 5.01 (“There shall be a formal ongoing process of student involvement in those aspects of the academic unit that affect their professional preparation”) might not sufficiently allow for ongoing, formal mechanisms for student involvement. The responses listed from the department -- a single student focus group, or offers of consultation with the 2 student organizations -- is a good interim step, but not a formal mechanism for review. Is there an opportunity for an elected student liaison position?
- While the department has already responded satisfactorily to external reviewer concerns about redundancy of courses between programs, if there were additional opportunities to combine coursework between the two programs, it might have the benefit of reducing teaching demands and the drawback of reducing the focus and tailoring of the two distinct programs.

Dean's Letter

APR's Comments on Dean's Letter (if applicable)

In response to both the external review and the department's self study, Associate Dean Ray Abhold wrote a letter addressing the concerns of those documents and the strengths of the department. The Dean's letter highlights and praises the strengths of the department, particularly emphasizing the student-centered curriculum. However, this letter does not indicate that there will be sufficient funding to support any significant increase in the number of tenure-track faculty possessing a terminal degree within the department, which was a concern of the self study.

APR's Recommendations (*must be completed*)

Recommendations:

- The Academic Program Review committee recommends that the Recreation Management and Therapeutic Recreation department continue its commitment to offering a "highly respected" and "student-centered" education program. The demonstrable successes of this program indicate that the current program, including its faculty, staff, administration, curriculum, and implementation, is fundamentally sound.
 - In response to the letter written by Associate Dean Ray Abhold, the APR recommends that the program, communally, develop a strategic plan with lists of targeted hires in specific areas, with the intent of reaching and maintaining the envisioned 11-12 FTE staff level for the next several years.
 - Taking into account the response in the above letter, the APR recommends exploring alternate paths to decrease the 300+ SCH/IFTE, including imposing voluntary limits on overload teaching, maintaining enrollment caps on the program and courses, discouraging any redundancy within the curriculum, and seeking any possible efficiencies from combining course offerings or covering multiple student learning outcomes in a single course.
 - APR recommends that the program continue to promote, highlight, and reward scholarly publication and professional involvement on the part of its faculty, and to encourage professional development on the part of the students. The department may wish to increase the visibility of research within the department, perhaps by creating individual web pages for all faculty members that list or reproduce their research, publications, scholarly credentials, and professional memberships.
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- No serious areas to address – review in 7 years
 - Some areas to address – review in 7 years
 - Some areas to address – department should submit short report on progress to Fac Senate/Provost's Office in 3 years

* APR's report to faculty senate will consist of this completed form in electronic form.