DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS

This year has been marked by significant accomplishments resulting from an assessment of departmental strengths and the capitalization on available opportunities. The foundations have been laid for expansion of teaching, research and extension functions through the cooperation of outside agencies.

A major effort, begun in June of 1977, was devoted to a comprehensive review of the departmental programs by the USDA Cooperative State Research Service. Conducted in May, 1978, the review focused primarily on the research program in recreation and parks, but included an evaluation of aspects of the teaching and extension programs as well. Both the self-study and the on-campus phases of the review highlighted directions for renewed efforts by the department.

Teaching

A significant accomplishment was the launching of the University-wide American Humanics program which resulted from a joint College of Agriculture—College of Education—Texas Agricultural Extension Service effort to develop a curriculum which would meet the needs of youth service agencies (such as 4-H, scouting, YMCA, etc.). This has resulted in increased employment opportunities for graduates and has aroused considerable interest within the state professional organization. Together with the expanding cooperative education program, the American Humanics program has assisted in attracting high quality transfer students and high school graduates. The departmental role in this effort is demonstrated by the fact that over 50 percent of the initial student participants in this program were majors in recreation and parks.

Adaptation of computer technology to the classroom has significantly enhanced the teaching program. Computer simulation development models have added a striking note of realism to courses with the development of interactive computer programs during the past year. Although developed as a teaching tool, the programs are sufficiently sophisticated that both the National Park Service and the state of Tennessee have expressed a desire to utilize the process as a planning tool.

Computer technology has also proved its utility in the administration aspects of the teaching program. The department has developed a data storage, and retrieval system designed to assist in the record keeping aspects of student enrollments and has enabled the department to have improved access to departmental alumni.

Limitations on teaching laboratory space have been partially alleviated through the assignment of temporary space for a park maintenance lab and by the designation of a new on-campus classroom demonstration area.

The scholastic quality of the student body has been demonstrated by the increasing numbers receiving scholarships, including five who received designated scholarships from funds raised through student-sponsored activities.

Research

In May 1978, the department conducted a review for the Cooperative State Research Service. While the report by the team is forthcoming, the major accomplishment of identification of new research directions has been realized. New emphasis in research includes a concentration of effort on Texas recreation resource problems and audiences.

Beginning in 1967, the department developed a continuing cooperative relationship with the National Park Service in a unique series of resource management seminars. The cooperative concept has since developed into the assignment of a NPS resident with the department (1973). The present incumbent’s assignment to the department was established under the provisions of the Intergovernmental Personnel Act to “... promote cooperative studies between the two agencies and provide for the exchange of knowledge and ideas...” between the National Park Service and the Department of Recreation and Parks. During the past year the Denver Service Center (NPS) has set aside $10,000 as “seed money” toward the development of mutually desirable research projects. This relationship between the department and the park service has benefited both undergraduate and graduate students in a variety of ways. Plans for continuing and improving this relationship through a NPS Cooperative Study Unit at Texas A&M are in progress, and a memorandum of understanding has been prepared for final approval of this unit in October of 1978.

Strong cooperative ties are also being formed with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, particularly with the Waterways Experiment Station (WES) at Vicksburg, Mississippi. Three graduates (1 Ph.D, 2 M.S.) are currently employed at WES and the NPS resident scientist at Texas A&M was named as the coordinating officer between the National Park Service and the Corps of Engineers. Cooperative research possibilities are being actively explored.

Water-orientated recreation research continued as a major emphasis within the department, with funded projects or submissions of topics ranging from the fishing utilization of artificial reefs to the recreational management of river systems. Faculty-
directed research has also focused on such diverse topics as performance criteria for urban recreation delivery systems, assisting the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service in the formulation of a national recreation policy statement examining the federal role in the private sector of outdoor recreation, and participating in a regional project (W-133) concerned with determinants of demand for outdoor recreation.

**Extension**

Recreation and parks specialists with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service provided on-site assistance for our thirty political subdivisions in resolving local problems. In cooperation with the Texas Recreation and Parks Society, the specialists conducted six regional workshops for park and recreation professionals, commissioners and board members.

Additional accomplishments included production of a directory of recreation professionals and agencies of Texas; publication and distribution of six newsletters, an audio-visual program and one report on departmental research for TAEX staff and park and recreation producers and users; initial implementation of a new educational module defining extension’s educational role in recreation and parks resource development; and initiation of a workshop series on the “marketing of leisure services.”

**Publications**


State of the Department Report, Fall, 1978