

The Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign has sought to enhance the awareness and knowledge of leisure service providers throughout Illinois and beyond. To better reflect an evolving field and curriculum, in 2004 the department was named the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism (RST). The first undergraduate course in recreation was offered in 1937 and by 1948, a formal recreation curriculum was established for the Bachelor of Science degree in Recreation. The Master of Science Degree in Recreation was approved in 1953 and the Doctor of Philosophy degree program was established in 1972. Currently, RST has 352 students (300 undergraduate and 22 master/30 doctoral graduate students) with concentrations in recreation, sport, and tourism management. The RST faculty are nationally and internationally recognized for their research in various areas of leisure, recreation, sport, and tourism (e.g. sport for development, wildlife, cultural sustainability). Using this advanced knowledge, the professors and lecturers help students prepare for a future of working as recreation professionals in an ever-evolving world. Additionally, students are able to engage in study abroad opportunities to New Zealand, Greece, and Fuji. Industries where RST students become employed include: public recreation; event planning; major/minor league, & college athletics, MWRs, YMCAs, resort & cruise lines, CVBs, hotel management and special recreation facilities.

The RST department is distinct from other recreation departments in a couple of ways; one is by having the Office of Recreation and Park Resources. This office first began as “the Field Service,” in 1957 in order to provide consultation and research services to parks and recreation agencies throughout Illinois. After years of evolution and several name changes, the Office of Recreation and Park Resources (ORPR) was revived in 2006 to provide these services once again. The purpose of ORPR is to serve practitioners, elected officials, communities and organizations by providing multiple services including strategic plans, community surveys, feasibility studies, staff trainings and workshops, involvement with the IPRA Leadership Academy, community outreach/consultations, involvement in the national “Play initiative,” publications, and co-creating the IPRA Community Benefits toolkit. The Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism also provides an online Master’s program for individuals seeking to advance their education but are unable to attend classes on campus. This program has grown exponentially over time and primarily caters to working professionals. The curriculum is comprised of courses to enhance one’s administrative knowledge of the leisure field (e.g. budgeting, marketing, and event planning).

The combination of research and public service offered by the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism and the ORPR has supported numerous Illinois service practitioners’ efforts for providing quality recreational opportunities. These two entities continuously seek opportunities for contributing to and enhancing the knowledge of leisure providers as well as their constituents. If you are interested in receiving support through the development of research projects or consulting services or would like to obtain additional information regarding the resources available through the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism please contact Jarrod Scheunemann at scheune1@illinois.edu.