

Cathi McMahan, Ph.D.
National Recreation and Parks Association Congress and Expo
"Great Ideas Start Here"
Houston, TX
October 7-10, 2013

Professional Development Grant Final Report

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Abstract:

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) Congress and Expo is an annual conference and trade show. The event was attended by 2,000 + recreation and park professionals, students, and faculty members. It served as an excellent opportunity to network with professionals in the field and to recruit potential internship sites for the ATU Recreation and Park Program. There were also at least three educational sessions that focused specifically on the COAPRT 2013 Accreditation Standards – these sessions were very much of interest and importance to me as our RPA program just went through the COAPRT Accreditation Process and we want to make sure that we maintain our accreditation status.

Restatement of problem researched, creative work, or professional enhancement opportunity:

The National Recreation and Parks Association is a membership organization for recreation and park professionals, students, and university/college faculty throughout the United States and abroad. The Congress and Expo is an annual event offering over 250 educational sessions, numerous networking opportunities, and boast an expo hall with hundreds of vendors with the latest and greatest in parks and recreation supplies and equipment. The purpose of this trip was to attend educational sessions (especially sessions focusing on accreditation with emphasis on the 2013 COAPRT standards since our program did have an accreditation site visit in March of 2012), network with professionals, encourage and engage the students in professional networking opportunities (allow them to meet professionals in the field), and to recruit for and promote Arkansas Tech University and our RPA Program.

Brief review of the professional enhancement opportunity, creative work, or research procedure:

I attended the 2013 National Recreation and Park Association Annual Congress and Expo for a number of reasons. First and foremost; I attended educational sessions that focused on the COAPRT 2013 Accreditation Standards – which was imperative due to our program's accreditation status. I also met and visited with professionals from other institutions of higher education that had recently been through and completed an actual re-accreditation visit and was able to share some very valuable insight with them. Secondly; I served as the faculty advisor for 5 Recreation and Park Administration students that attended the NRPA Congress and Expo for the first time. I also attended the NRPA Congress and Expo to seek information pertaining to the latest trends and issues in the Recreation and Park profession and also in higher education. And last but not least; I had the opportunity to network with professionals in the field and secured a

number of contacts for potential internship opportunities for our RPA students. All in all, the trip was very successful for both myself and for the students that attended.

Summary of findings, outcomes, or experiences:

Attend and participate in the 2011 NRPA Congress and Expo in Houston, TX from October 7-10, 2013.

Attend all educational sessions focusing on COAPRT 2013 Accreditation Standards and network with others while attending these sessions.

Attend social events while at the Congress in order to meet professionals in the field to talk about internship opportunities for our students – also introduce students to the professionals. Engage students in networking while at the Congress and Expo.

Conclusion and recommendations:

I utilized the information and knowledge gained from the NRPA Congress and Expo in a number of ways: first and foremost I utilized the information and knowledge gained to keep abreast of important COAPRT Accreditation information and changes in standards, etc.. I feel that the knowledge gained from attending the educational sessions helped me to stay on top of changes in accreditation standards and stay on top of the process. I also feel that by attending the NRPA Congress and Expo I was able to orient students to the world of continuing professional development and networking. It also looks like one of the students that attended gained an internship out of it.