Master of Science in Recreation, Park, and Tourism Administration

Recreation, park, and tourism professionals create and stage programs and events; manage resources and facilities; and administer agencies that service and enhance the quality of life of individuals, families, and communities. They function as catalysts of human growth, community connection, and environmental sustainability. The Department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Administration (RPTA) at Western Illinois University is meeting this challenge by preparing professionals for a variety of demanding and rewarding arenas of service.

Program Location: Macomb, Quad Cities

Admission Requirements
Admission requires a completed bachelor’s degree from an institution accredited by the appropriate regional accrediting agency. A cumulative undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.75 or a last two years’ undergraduate GPA of 3.0 is required for regular admission. Students with lower GPAs may occasionally be admitted on probationary status if letters of recommendation are outstanding. Application to the department requires a current vita, a statement of career goals (form supplied by the department), and three letters of recommendation.

Degree Requirements
The Master of Science (MS) in RPTA degree program, which consists of a total of 34 semester hours (sh), requires 16 sh of core classes; 12 sh of elective coursework in the student’s area of specialization; and a 6 sh culmination option of either a thesis, a professional internship, or an applied research project. Many students complete the degree in three semesters.

Integrated Master’s Degree Program
The RPTA Integrated Master’s Degree Program allows exceptional RPTA undergraduate students from Western to take up to 9 sh of 400G/B level classes that count toward the requirements for the bachelor’s and master’s degrees in RPTA. This program will allow outstanding undergraduates to earn both degrees in five years.

Career Opportunities
Exciting and rewarding career opportunities are available to RPTA graduates through the following professional endeavors:

Adventure Recreation & Camp Administration
- Natural/historical interpreter
- Camp director
- Conference center manager
- Scouting executive
- Outdoor pursuits manager
- Outdoor education instructor

Leisure Services Management
- Resort recreation director
- Military recreation director
- Park district director
- Recreation superintendent

Leisure Recreation Program Delivery – Youth and Human Services
- Park district supervisor
- Athletics supervisor
- Recreation center director
- YMCA/YWCA supervisor or director
- Racquet and fitness center director
- Corporate recreation director

Natural Resources Recreation Management
- Park district/Conservation district manager
- Superintendent or state or federal park manager/Ranger

Therapeutic Recreation*
- Clinical recreational therapist in hospital or rehabilitation center
- Director of recreation for special populations—community based
- Activities director in long-term care facility
- Adventure recreation therapist
*Not available in Quad Cities

Tourism and Event Management
- Event planning and management
- Manager of civic center
- Convention and visitors bureau director
- Local/regional/state tourism manager

Students are encouraged to develop professional networks at the state, regional, national, and international levels. The RPTA department has an extensive network of committed alumni throughout the country and the world.
Featured Alumni
I started college with an interest ... that interest developed into a passion ... and that passion evolved into a career with the United States Army Corps of Engineers in Natural Resource Management. A master's degree in Recreation, Park and Tourism Administration from WIU was not only helpful in honing my skills as a professional, it was instrumental in furthering my career and transcending my expectations as a member in society.

– Zach Nordhoff, MS, 2006, National Park Service, Mark Twain Lake, Missouri

Faculty Expertise
All graduate faculty possess terminal degrees in recreation, parks, tourism, or other related fields. Each faculty member has a particular area of expertise, ranging from public administration, nonprofit management, therapeutic recreation, outdoor recreation, tourism, facility management, and camp administration. Faculty members are recognized nationally and internationally for their research and publications.

Distinctive Features
• The RPTA department is quite diverse, with several graduate faculty possessing international perspectives and considerable professional and personal experience. Graduate students come from Europe, Central and South America, and a number of Asian countries.

Graduate Assistantship Opportunities
The RPTA department provides and coordinates a number of varied graduate assistantships on and off campus. Assistantships are awarded based on academic merit and provide a tuition waiver and monthly stipend in return for 13 to 20 hours of work per week. Graduate assistants may work closely with a faculty member on research or instructional tasks, or they may be assigned to work with a local leisure service agency such as the Western Illinois University Spencer Student Recreation Center, Horn Field campus, local park districts, special recreation associations, outdoor recreation centers, retirement centers, convention and visitors’ bureaus, museums, and other leisure-related agencies.

Western Illinois University is an Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity employer with a strong commitment to diversity. In that spirit, we are particularly interested in receiving applications from a broad spectrum of people, including, but not limited to, minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities. WIU has a non-discrimination policy that includes sex, race, color, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, religion, age, marital status, national origin, disability, and veteran status.

Contact Information
For admissions process and general program information, contact the School of Graduate Studies, Western Illinois University, 1 University Circle, Macomb, IL 61455, (309) 298-1806, (877) WIU GRAD toll-free, Grad-Office@wiu.edu, wiu.edu/grad.

For specific program questions, contact the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Administration, Western Illinois University, 1 University Circle, Macomb, IL 61455, (309) 298-1967, rpta@wiu.edu, wiu.edu/rpta.

Quad Cities Campus: Western Illinois University, Department of Recreation, Park & Tourism Administration, 3300 River Drive, Room 1205, Moline, IL 61265, (309) 762-3999 ext. 62355.