

# 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.*

## 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 an undergraduate GPA of 3.0 for the last two years 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), including 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 students to earn both degrees in five years.

## Career Opportunities

Exciting and rewarding career opportunities are available to RPTA graduates through the following professions:

## Adventure Recreation and 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
- Natural resource manager/technician/planner
- Federal park ranger
- park department manager
- Outdoor recreation planner
- Environmental educator

## Therapeutic Recreation\*

- Clinical recreational therapist in hospital or rehabilitation center

**Program Location:**  
Macomb, Quad Cities

## Contact Information

### Questions about the program:

Department of Recreation, Park and  
Tourism Administration  
(309) 298-1967  
QC: (309) 762-3999 ext. 62355  
rpta@wiu.edu  
wiu.edu/rpta

### General admission questions:

School of Graduate Studies  
(309) 298-1806 or (877) WIU GRAD  
Grad-Office@wiu.edu  
wiu.edu/grad

*Higher Values in  
Higher Education*

Academic Excellence  
Educational Opportunity  
Personal Growth  
Social Responsibility



**WESTERN  
ILLINOIS  
UNIVERSITY**

- Director of recreation for special populations—community based
  - Activities director in long-term care facility
  - Adventure recreation therapist
- \*Available only in Macomb

## 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

*“My love of the outdoors brought me to the RPTA undergraduate program. I liked it so much I stayed for a master’s degree in RPTA. As a natural resources management student, the Quad Cities program offered coursework and experience I needed to land my dream job. I currently serve as a natural resource specialist on the mighty Mississippi River, and my professional successes are largely attributed to the terrific coursework and faculty of the RPTA department.”*

— Steve Acuff, MS, 2018,  
USMC Veteran, Natural Resource Specialist,  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

## 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, natural resource management, tourism, facility management, event management and camp administration. Faculty members are recognized nationally and internationally for their research and publications.

## Distinctive Features

- The RPTA department is one of a limited number to hold professional accreditation from the National Recreation and Park Association.
- Established in 1967, the department is a recognized leader in preparing professionals for every aspect of the recreation, parks and leisure services field.
- Classes are scheduled to allow nontraditional students the opportunity to earn a master’s degree over a longer span of time.
- Numerous opportunities are available for students to obtain professional qualifications and certifications such as certified outdoor



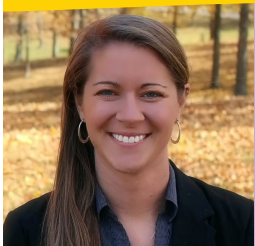
educator, outdoor leader certificate, wilderness first responder, kayak instructor and other certifications relevant to the student’s chosen area of specialization.

- 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 13-20 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 WIU’s Spencer Student Recreation Center, Horn Field Campus, local park districts, special recreation associations, YMCAs, 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.*



*“Finding the RPTA Department at WIU was the first step in launching me into a whirlwind of professional advancements. Not only did they get me ready to pursue my passion as a young professional in the therapeutic recreation field, they also prepared me to take on the challenges in my life I did not even know were coming. I am honored to be a part of such a diverse family unit and am inspired by the continued support I see them giving to all alumni.”*

— Rachel Lenz, MS, 2012, CTRS, CPRP  
Executive Director, Macomb, Illinois Park District