

<https://youtu.be/DlfRuhYst2k>

Dear Alumni, Partners and Friends of RPTA:

In my continuing role as Interim Chair, I wanted to reach out and let you know what has been going on in the RPTA Department. While there continue to challenges from Covid-19, we have responded by becoming more nimble in how we offer our courses. Our students have indicated a preference for face-to-face learning, be it in the classroom or via Zoom. We have been able to livestream the majority of our courses so that students can learn real-time from the classroom, their homes, or wherever they might be. This provides real-time interaction between faculty and students that enriches the learning experience. Students can now blend in-person, livestream, and asynchronous online courses to complete their undergraduate and graduate degrees in RPTA in Macomb, the Quad Cities, and remotely. The successes in the use of technology have simply reinforced what you already know: we are a student-centered department committed to providing the best education possible to tomorrow's leaders in an extremely diverse, challenging and rewarding field. I truly believe we are one of the premiere professional preparation programs in the world, let alone the United States.

Our department is in the process of being reaccredited. We have submitted our documentation to Council on Accreditation Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions (COAPRT) and will welcome the site visit in the spring.

We are in the process of updating and streamlining our graduate curriculum after having successfully done so with our undergraduate program last year. As part of this process, we have updated our Post Baccalaureate Certificate in Event Planning and will begin offering it upon the provost's approval. Our goal is to create a graduate program that serves not only the needs of traditional students, but also of adult learners and practitioners who may not be able to attend classes on campus or during work hours. We appreciate the feedback our alumni and partners have provided that has helped shape and guide this process.

In November, we welcomed Riley Konitzer as our new academic advisor for students on the Macomb campus. They will be filling a very needed position for us; our academic advisor is an important touch point for all our students and serves as both a conduit and a sounding board guiding them on their academic journeys to matriculation and beyond.

We have completed Phase I of the Lupton Outdoor Building. The new pavilion will provide us space for teaching and engaging with groups at Horn Field Campus. Thank you to everyone who has supported this project. Building on this success, the department is currently conducting a search for an Outdoor Recreation faculty member and we hope to have this person onboard to begin in the Fall of 2022. This will allow us to resume offering courses that have been needed for our Outdoor Recreation Option and Outdoor Leadership minor. They will also play a vital role in recruiting for these offerings.

On January 28, 2022 from 6-9 pm at the Elephant & Castle Pub and Restaurant (111 W. Adams St) in Chicago, in conjunction with the IPRA/IAPD Conference, we will be hosting an alumni and friends gathering. I will be there as well as several of our faculty and some of our current graduate and undergraduate students. We would truly love to see you if you are in the area. To register or learn more, please visit <https://bit.ly/RPTAAlumni>

You may want to mark your calendars to take part in our Summer Opportunities Fair on February 17, 2022 or to attend the Professional Development Conference on April 15, 2022. More information about these events will follow. You can also follow us on social media to stay aware of what is going on in the department: <http://www.wiu.edu/coehs/rpta/>, Facebook - WIU Recreation, Park and Tourism Administration @rpta.wiu, Instagram - WIURPTA - #wiurpta

Most importantly, I would like to simply say, "Thank You" to all our faculty, staff, alumni, friends and partners for all you do for the RPTA department. The knowledge you share, the professionalism you exhibit and your willingness to go above and beyond for RPTA is simply and truly what makes and exemplifies what it means to be a member of the RPTA family. In case you need a reminder of what that means, please view the short videos from some of our current students that are included at the end of this letter, as well as our Share the Vision video which outlines our priorities moving forward.

Happy Holidays,

Michael D. Lukkarinen

Michael D Lukkarinen, Interim Chair

Student Video Links:

<https://youtu.be/Bznb57mlohA>

<https://youtu.be/cZ1q0ba1dZM>

<https://youtu.be/rKYomjudCAU>

<https://youtu.be/TzidP4vRfEA>

<https://youtu.be/CP-pv9tiuU0>

https://youtu.be/j3_Xe5LIII

<https://youtu.be/3irq5ozmdOM>

RPTA Department Areas of Need

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9YPUWDEwhc>