

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.

Programs of Study

In a world characterized by new technology and rapidly changing human needs, leisure is increasingly recognized for its contribution to a fulfilling life. Through a combination of classroom and experiential learning opportunities, our faculty train tomorrow's leaders for fulfilling administrative careers in:

- Tourism, hospitality and event management
- Non-profit administration
- Camps
- Outdoor recreation
- Resource management
- Recreation therapy and inclusion
- Campus recreation
- Park districts and public recreation
- Community sport and entertainment

Degree Requirements

Students may complete the degree on the Macomb and/or Quad Cities campus. In addition, the curriculum is designed to be flexible. Students have the opportunity to choose among directed electives and the exit option that best positions them for their future careers based on the approval of their graduate committee. Some students will complete the required hours in three semesters; others choose to complete the requirements at a slower pace. Courses are also offered at times that allow nontraditional students the opportunity to earn the degree over a longer span of time.

- Core courses 16 SH
- Directed electives 12 SH
- Exit options 6 SH
 - Thesis
 - Graduate research project
 - Graduate internship

Career Opportunities

Leisure industries are poised to grow greatly within the next 10 years according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Recent RPTA graduates have found employment with:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- National Park Service
- Entertainment cruises
- Park districts across Illinois
- Hy-Vee
- Big Brothers Big Sisters
- Country clubs across Illinois
- Mark Twain State Park
- Adventure Works
- Washington state parks
- American Cancer Society
- TOP Golf
- U.S. Forest Service
- George Johnson Development

The RPTA department has an extensive network of committed alumni around the world; students are provided opportunities to develop relationships with alumni and professional networks as they complete their degrees.

Admission Requirements

Admission requires a completed bachelor's degree from an institution accredited by the appropriate regional accrediting body. A cumulative undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.75, or undergraduate GPA of 3.0 for the last two years is required for regular admission. Students with lower GPAs may occasionally be admitted on a probationary status if letters of recommendation are outstanding.

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



Application to the department requires a:

1. Current resume
2. Cumulative GPA of 2.75 overall or 3.0 in the last two years
3. Statement of Intent (a minimum of 500 words and a maximum of 1000 words, double-spaced) that explains:
 - why the student wants to attend Western Illinois University;
 - what previous experiences they have that will contribute to their success in graduate studies; and,
 - how they believe graduate studies in Recreation, Park and Tourism Administration is consistent with their academic emphasis, career aspirations, and/or long-term academic/professional goals.
4. Three letters of recommendation

Integrated Master's Degree Program

The RPTA Integrated Master's Degree program allows exceptional RPTA undergraduate students from WIU to complete up to 9 semester hours of 400G/B level classes that can count toward the requirements for the bachelor's and master's degrees in RPTA. Students completing this program would be able to earn both degrees in five years.

Graduate Assistantships

The RPTA department provides and coordinates a number of graduate assistantships on and off campus. Graduate assistantships are available on both the Macomb and Quad Cities' campuses. Assistantships are awarded based on academic merit and provide a tuition waiver and monthly stipend in return for working 13-20 hours per week. Graduate assistants may work closely with faculty members on research projects, or they may be assigned to work with a local leisure service agency such as WIU Campus Recreation, Horn Field Campus, local YMCAs and park districts, convention and visitors bureaus, museums and other leisure-related agencies. Students with less than a 3.0 GPA are not typically eligible for graduate assistantships. There is a process to petition for exception from this rule, which is outlined on the School for Graduate Studies' website.

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.



Featured Alumni



My love for 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 expertise 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



The RPTA program allowed me to customize my experience and classes to help tailor my learning experience to better prepare me for my job now. The small class sizes allowed me to connect with professors and other students. I wouldn't be in the position I am now without Western and the RPTA program.

—Stephanie Johnson, MS, 2017,
Facility Coordinator, UIC Campus Recreation



"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 recreation therapy and inclusion fields, they also prepared me to take on the challenges in my life I didn't even know were coming. As I've advanced in public recreation, I've realized how honored I am to be a part of such a diverse department, and am inspired by the opportunities I have to work with the future recreation leaders of Illinois."

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