

PENNSTATE



Department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management

# 2015-2019 STRATEGIC PLAN



# The Department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management Strategic Plan

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LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT HEAD  
PETER NEWMAN



Since 1946 the Department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management has been making an impact through teaching, research, and outreach. During the past seven decades, our faculty have influenced the trajectory of the tourism industry, the management of local, state and national parks, and informed society about the connections between leisure, human development and health and well-being.

As a society we are challenged to understand and adapt to changing ecological, climatic and social trends. All of these trends have drastic effects on how we design and manage parks and protected areas, tourism opportunities, and programming for leisure activities. Our faculty and students are poised to inform and tackle these challenges.

We are well-positioned to make interdisciplinary contributions by bringing experts together from the social sciences, health sciences, ecology, and other disciplines to better understand this dynamic world and potential interventions that improve the human condition.

Our mission is to transform human health and well being through recreation, park, tourism and leisure opportunities.

Following is our strategic plan that outlines some of our goals and actions for the next five years and provides examples of the impact we make through teaching, research and outreach. We are proud of our legacy and look forward to creating the next generation of leaders and the knowledge they need to solve challenges ahead.

Peter Newman  
Department Head



## WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE VALUE

Faculty in the Department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management use various socio-ecological systems approaches to teach, conduct research, and engage in outreach services that influence human behavior and the provision and management of recreation, park, tourism and leisure services. Generally, we focus on global issues associated with the contribution of leisure to human development, health and wellness as well as the impact of recreation, park and tourism on ecological, psychological, social economic, and cultural systems.

We value intellectual curiosity leading to discovery, integrity and honesty, respect for others, excellence, accountability, community, and collegiality.

# Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management

2014-2019 Model of the RPTM Strategic Plan

## GOALS

### TEACHING

## STRATEGIES

Revise undergraduate and graduate curricula to

Develop a program at the Penn State Abington c

Enhance themes of diversity, ethics and global e

Maintain excellence in the Professional Golf Man

Enhance opportunities for engaged scholarship

### RESEARCH

Promotion of health, youth development and risk

Visitor management in protected areas (visitor ca

Understanding the positive and negative aspects

Determining and addressing the needs of vulner

Golfer health and performance

### SERVICE/ OUTREACH

Strengthen international service

Strengthen service to the academy through lead  
societies and participation on editorial review bo

Strengthen outreach efforts within Pennsylvania,  
those who are disadvantaged or underserved

### DEPARTMENTAL OPERATIONS

Increase communication and visibility of RPTM b  
communications plan

Provide our students with the highest level of stu

Identify sources for department revenue enhanc

Prioritize diversity enhancement across all areas

Prepare a department code that ensures govern  
values of the program

incorporate concepts of sustainability

campus

education in our curricula

agement (PGM) option

reduction via leisure-based interventions

capacity, soundscape and education strategies)

s of tourism and tourism development

able populations

ership positions within professional  
boards

the U.S., and in international contexts, particularly to

y developing a comprehensive

udent-centered service

ement

of departmental functioning

ance structures reflecting the shared

## MISSION

To transform  
human health  
and well-  
being through  
engaging people  
in recreation,  
park, tourism and  
leisure settings.

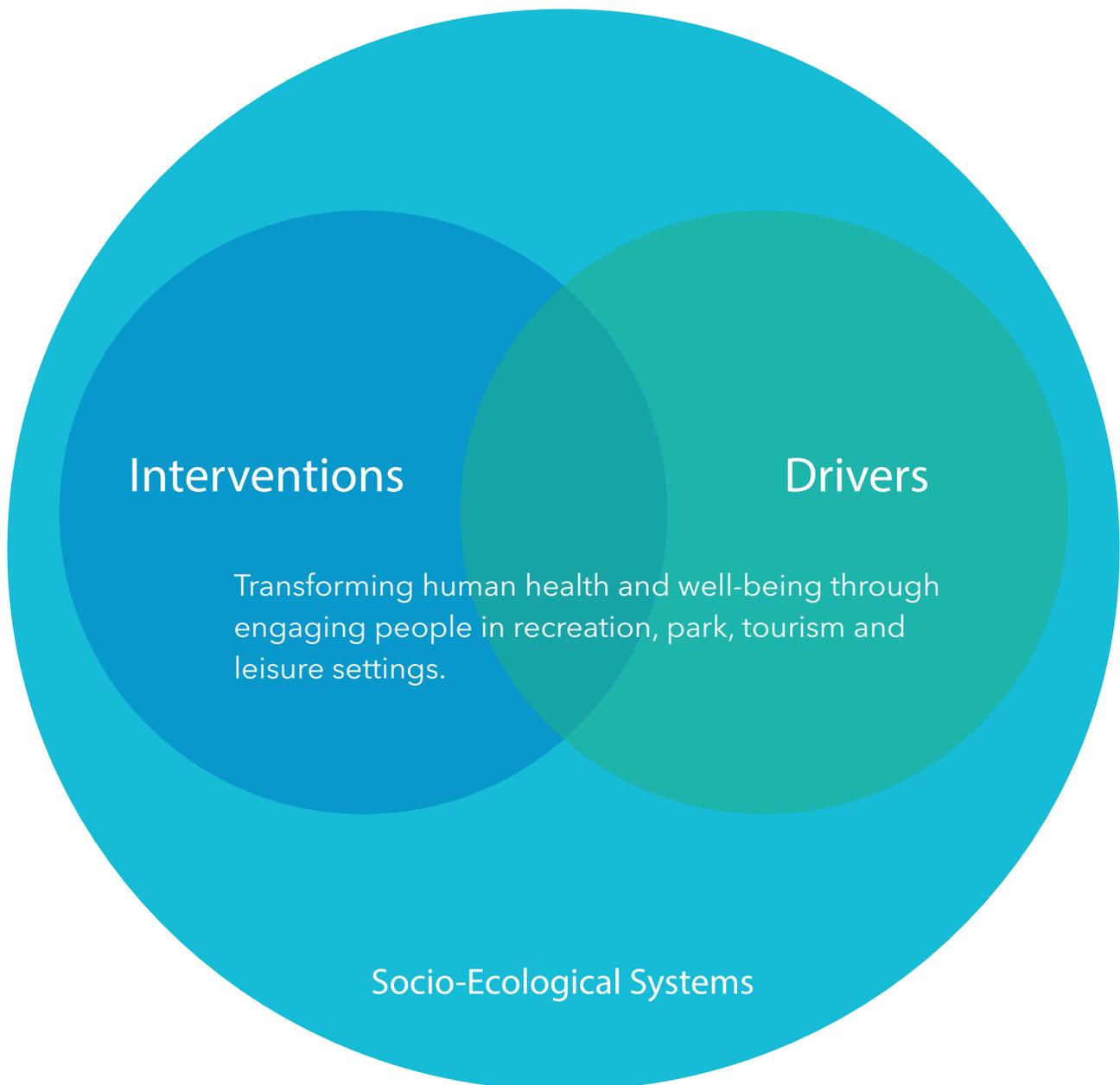
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## RECREATION, PARK, AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT

### OUR CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

As indicated by our mission, we aim to transform human and environmental health and well-being. To do this, as depicted in the associated figure, we take a socio-ecological approach to our activities. This approach suggests that there are many drivers (or factors) that influence what people do in their discretionary, free, or leisure time. These drivers may include personal characteristics such as age or gender, interpersonal factors such as family structure or peer relationships, community level factors such as availability of parks and recreation facilities or type and amount of impact through tourism activities, and societal structures and policies such as social norms and cultural considerations.

We strive to better understand these drivers so that we can support and develop interventions that focus on improving benefits derived from leisure activity and mitigate or prevent negative outcomes. Benefits can be economic, biophysical, mental, social, spiritual, or environmental and can accrue to individuals, communities and/or environments. Negative outcomes include sedentary behavior, environmental degradation, adverse community impacts, and addictions. Examples of interventions include community level policy development, school based programs, marketing strategies, and management activities.



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Socio-ecological systems are characterized as being complex and dynamic. Models that impact and improve these systems set the stage for innovative solutions and approaches to impacting and improving the human condition. As such, RPTM is well-positioned to work synergistically with experts from the social sciences, ecology, health sciences, and others to better discover and understand drivers and interventions that contribute to human development, health and well-being.

We strive to educate and inspire undergraduate and graduate students to make contributions to society, and our conceptual approach serves as the foundation of what and how we teach. In particular, we integrate topics such as diversity; environmental sustainability; human development, health and well-being; social innovation and entrepreneurship; community and economic development; and leadership and management across the undergraduate and graduate curricula. We provide the skills, opportunities and resources for students to learn critical thinking, problem-solving and systems thinking so they are prepared to effectively respond to human, social and environmental issues.

Specific ways that RPTM faculty make a difference for undergraduate and graduate students through teaching include:

- ✔ engaging students in experiential learning
- ✔ providing opportunities for international experiences
- ✔ encouraging involvement in professional organizations

# TEACHING



# RECREATION, PARK, AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM



Our department offers a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degree in Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management. Undergraduate students may choose from the following three degree options:

- ✔ Community and Commercial Recreation Management
- ✔ Outdoor Recreation
- ✔ Professional Golf Management (PGM)



A degree from RPTM is suited to students with career interests in supervisory and administrative positions in the following fields:

- ✔ Parks and land management agencies
- ✔ Environmental interpretation centers
- ✔ Commercial, community and municipal recreation organizations
- ✔ Tourism bureaus and private industry
- ✔ Golf courses
- ✔ Non-profit organizations
- ✔ Schools, colleges and universities

## Professional Internships

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In order to enhance their classroom experiences, undergraduate students in the Outdoor Recreation and Community and Commercial Recreation degree options must complete a two-tiered internship requirement. Students in the PGM option must complete 16 months of cooperative education internship under the supervision of a Class A member of the Professional Golfers' Association of America.

The primary purpose of these internships is to enable each student to meet his or her educational objectives through participation in a well-planned and often personalized practical experience related to their career objectives. Students are encouraged to seek and select internship agencies that offer a diversity of leadership and administrative opportunities in areas that correspond to their own professional goals.

# UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE OPTIONS

## COMMUNITY & COMMERCIAL RECREATION

This option focuses on management in the private/commercial, non-profit, and public sectors of recreation/leisure services. Students who complete an undergraduate major in RPTM with a Community and Commercial Recreation Management option will have demonstrated the ability to:

- ✔ Assess social, environmental, political and economic benefits and demerits of tourism development
- ✔ Develop a comprehensive recreation and tourism business plan taking into consideration an understanding of the strategic management process and how that

process applies to the for-profit recreation industry.

- ✔ Develop strategic management decisions for non-profit and for-profit recreation/tourism organizations grounded in the analysis of market, financial, legal and political environments.
- ✔ Present their ideas orally and in writing in a manner that conveys professional competence and technical expertise.

RPTM students in the Community and Commercial Recreation option have a wide range of career options that include, but are not limited to:

- ✔ Resorts
- ✔ Theme parks
- ✔ Convention centers
- ✔ Tourism promotion/planning agencies
- ✔ Corporate employee recreation
- ✔ Municipal, state, and federal government agencies
- ✔ Recreation divisions of armed services
- ✔ YMCA/YWCAs, United Way, and other non-profit organizations
- ✔ University (student unions, intramural, and alumni services)



Penn State's historic, energetic campus is the ideal place to study community and commercial recreation

# UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE OPTIONS

## OUTDOOR RECREATION



This option prepares students for careers in outdoor recreation and with other environmentally oriented organizations in the public and private sectors. Students who complete an undergraduate major in RPTM with an Outdoor Recreation option will have demonstrated the ability to:

- ✔ Show awareness of the history, professional resources and best practices in the field of environmental interpretation.
- ✔ Access sources of information and materials for environmental education content and methods.
- ✔ Develop a working knowledge of the philosophy, history, content, resources, and current methodology trends in the field of environmental education.
- ✔ Show familiarity with outdoor leadership principles and begin to

develop skills in decision-making, judgment, program design, and group facilitation.

- ✔ Plan, organize, implement and evaluate outdoor experiential education programs.
- ✔ Provide input into the planning and design of indoor and outdoor recreation and park facilities, and the ability to operate such facilities in a safe, efficient and cost effective manner.
- ✔ Acquire and effectively manage fiscal and human resources in the operation of a public-sector recreation and park agency.

### *The option offers three tracks:*

- ✔ The **environmental interpretation** track focuses on natural and cultural history interpretation, including environmental

education. Many of the courses in this track are taught by faculty of Shaver's Creek Environmental Center. This track prepares students to work as interpreters or environmental educators in parks, nature centers, historic sites, camps, and similar organizations.

- ✔ The **adventure-based programming** track emphasizes leadership and management skills needed to implement adventure-based programs. This track prepares students to work as leaders or guides for adventure activities in adventure businesses, camps, and schools.
- ✔ The **park management** track prepares students to manage natural resources, facilities, and visitors in federal, state, and local parks, commercial outdoor facilities, and camps.

# UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE OPTIONS

## PROFESSIONAL GOLF MANAGEMENT

Our undergraduate degree option Professional Golf Management (PGM) has a 100% job placement. The demand for golf professionals continues to increase. The Penn State Professional Golf Management option, a PGA-accredited program, helps prepare students for careers in the golf industry. Being endorsed by the Professional Golfer's Association of America allows students to fast track to full PGA membership while obtaining an undergraduate degree from Penn State University.

Students who complete an undergraduate major in RPTM with a Professional Golf Management Option will have demonstrated the ability to:

- Assess leadership and management principles including customer service, interpersonal skills, business communication,

conflict resolution, time management, negotiating, project management, marketing, and community relations.

- Evaluate basic concepts of financial and managerial accounting, along with accounting rules and techniques associated with business transactions and financial statements.
- Show how to manage human resources including employment law, job descriptions and performance standards, evaluating and improving employee performance, recruiting and employee training programs, employee benefit programs, and contracts.
- Develop basic food and beverage principles including ordering and inventory control, labor costs,

calculating menu prices, health regulations and permits, and licensing and liability laws.

- Implement best teaching practices related to club design and fitting; ball flight laws, recruiting and retaining clients; utilizing technology for teaching and club fitting; analyzing, communicating, correcting, and coaching; developing junior golf programs; and applying the rules of golf.
- Assess retail management including advertising and branding strategies, market and competition, sales forecast and inventory budgets, merchandise assortment plan, vendor selection, open-to-buy plan, performance measurements, inventory software applications, inventory control, and display techniques.



Graduates of the RPTM's Professional Golf Management program have gone on to administer and manage some of the world's most prestigious golf tournaments

# RECREATION, PARK, AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM

Our department offers a Master of Science (M.S.) degree as well as a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) degree. The M.S. degree is intended to lead to the Ph.D. Specifically:

- ✔ The Master of Science (M.S.) program is designed for students who wish to continue their studies at the doctoral level at Penn State. These are students who wish to pursue a Ph.D. degree but do not yet have an M.S. degree. Completing a separate thesis will earn a master's degree in the process of working toward the doctorate.
- ✔ For students who already have a master's degree, the Ph.D. program provides in-depth preparation for research and teaching positions at the college and university levels as well as higher-level administrative positions in the public, private, and non-profit sectors.
- ✔ Doctoral students may also enter a dual degree program with RPTM and Human Dimensions of Natural Resources and the Environment (HDNRE).

The multi-disciplinary graduate program is designed to educate students about research, theory, and practice related to recreation, parks, tourism and leisure as experienced at the individual, societal, and cross-cultural levels. Both the M.S. and the Ph.D. programs help students develop an understanding of the social, environmental, psychological, and economic aspects of human behavior in relation to the experience and delivery of recreation, park, tourism and leisure activities.



## WHERE OUR GRADUATES END UP

Undergraduates have launched their careers in exciting positions at a wide array of organizations:

- ✓ Acushnet Company
- ✓ Allegheny Mountains Convention & Visitors Bureau
- ✓ Anne Arundel Department of Recreation & Parks
- ✓ ARAMARK Convention Centers
- ✓ Augusta National GC
- ✓ Baltimore Zoo
- ✓ Bellevue Parks and Community Services
- ✓ Best Western
- ✓ Boca Raton Parks and Recreation Department
- ✓ Bryce Jordan Center
- ✓ Bureau of Land Management
- ✓ Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium
- ✓ Centre County Convention and Visitors Bureau
- ✓ Charleston County Parks & Recreation Commission
- ✓ City of Buffalo Department of Parks and Recreation
- ✓ City of Killeen Parks and Recreation Department
- ✓ Clear Channel Communications
- ✓ Cobra/PUMA Golf
- ✓ Columbus Zoo
- ✓ Congressional Country Club
- ✓ CONSOL Energy Center
- ✓ Creative Event Planning
- ✓ Expert Events
- ✓ Giant Center
- ✓ Greenbrier
- ✓ Hershey Foods Corporation
- ✓ House of Blues
- ✓ Madison Square Garden
- ✓ Maidstone Golf Club
- ✓ Marriott Golf
- ✓ Merion Golf Club
- ✓ Minute Man National Historic Park
- ✓ Montshire Museum of Science
- ✓ National Aquarium of Baltimore
- ✓ National Park Service
- ✓ National Tour Association
- ✓ Nike, Inc.
- ✓ Oakmont Country Club
- ✓ Outside Television
- ✓ Pennsylvania Convention Center
- ✓ Philadelphia Eagles Television Network
- ✓ Pine Valley Golf Club
- ✓ Pittsburgh City Parks
- ✓ Plainfield Country Club
- ✓ Polo Ralph Lauren
- ✓ Reynolds Plantation
- ✓ Ridgewood CC
- ✓ Shinnecock Hills Golf Club
- ✓ The Country Club
- ✓ The Franklin Institute
- ✓ The Kennedy Center
- ✓ The Sunflower Farm
- ✓ Trump National Golf Club
- ✓ UNIGLOBE Travel Partners
- ✓ US Bank Arena
- ✓ Vagabond Cruises
- ✓ Walnut Creek Amphitheater
- ✓ Wembley Stadium

Our doctoral graduates typically continue their recreation, park and tourism careers in the university setting as professors, lecturers, and researchers. Many of our former Ph.D. students now apply their advanced skills as researchers at local, state, and national government agencies, or in the non-profit sector. Still others work as employees of consulting firms or as owners of their own businesses.



# RESEARCH



Faculty in RPTM are productive scholars who collectively have published in the highest quality peer-reviewed journals; made significant contributions to management practices; developed health-improving interventions for people across the life-span; secured large external grants from a variety of federal, state and local agencies; and won many local, state, national and international accolades. In keeping with the land-grant mission of Penn State, the majority of research conducted by faculty members has direct application to improving people's lives and promoting sustainable ecosystems and communities.

RPTM faculty mentor graduate and undergraduate students in the research process and facilitate their direct involvement in faculty-led research projects. Students are encouraged to get involved in various research labs to gain as much experience as possible.



## FACULTY RESEARCH MAKING A DIFFERENCE

### SOCIAL SCIENCE ACOUSTICS LABORATORY



The spectrum of sound  
and its role in human  
well-being

The ability to experience quiet and hear natural sounds, such as wind, water, and birdsong, is a well-recognized aspect of a wildland experience. However, noise from human activities is increasingly present in wildlands and an emerging body of research suggests that anthropogenic noise has both ecological and experiential consequences. Anthropogenic noise can originate from sources within parks or protected areas, such as the noise from motorized recreation activities or visitor transportation,

or via exterior yet intruding sources such as aircraft over flights. The Social Science Acoustics Laboratory conducts controlled experiments that explore the relationship between noise stimuli and psychological as well as physiological responses. Our laboratory is interdisciplinary, partners with the National Park Service and works across campus with faculty and students in the Department of Bio-Behavioral Health, the Graduate Program in Acoustics, Psychology, the Rock Ethics Institute as well as the Institute of Arts and Humanities.



## LEAVE NO TRACE

Depreciative behaviors leading to social and ecological impacts continue to be of concern for park and protected area managers. Leave No Trace recommended practices are the most prominent strategy for curbing impactful recreational behaviors. Despite the prominence of Leave No Trace, social science research that provides understanding of visitor perceptions, such as attitudes or beliefs pertaining to Leave No Trace, is limited. Much of this research

focuses upon social science-based Leave No Trace-related communication strategies as they pertain to visitor-use management, visitor behaviors, and social and ecological conditions in parks and protected areas. Understanding visitor perceptions regarding Leave No Trace allows for the development of effective communication strategies that can induce behaviors that align with recommended practices, leading to healthier social and ecological conditions.



Preserving outdoor areas for future generations

## UNDERSTANDING AND FACILITATING LEISURE FOR PEOPLE WITH BARRIERS

Faculty from RPTM and the Center for Healthy Aging examined data from a series of focus groups with older adults. Based on these data a model was developed. The model helped to explain older adults' leisure engagement (including barriers and facilitators) as it relates to their use of senior centers and their general well-being. The research team plans to eventually develop relevant community-based services. Also, faculty,

including colleagues from Spain, are examining effects of a leisure education program designed to enhance the functioning and enjoyment of adults with autism. Additionally, faculty are working with the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness to develop a process to explore perceptions of leisure by veterans who have sustained a traumatic brain injury. The results are expected to become the basis for a leisure education intervention.



Ensuring benefits of leisure for an inclusive and diverse audience

## EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO TOURISM



### The feelings and lasting benefits generated by travel

Tourism researchers have traditionally assessed the utilitarian (not the affective/emotional) attributes of tourism products and services. Those who have studied emotions in the context of travel have found that the number and type of emotions experienced vary throughout the tourism experience. They have paid little attention to the specific emotions (e.g., joy, interest, disgust, sadness) felt by tourists or their lasting benefits

(e.g., happiness, well-being). A joint, on-going longitudinal project managed by faculty in RPTM and at NHTV-Breda in the Netherlands has expanded upon this line of research by using various forms of data collection (i.e., interviews, diaries, online questionnaires, panels) to study the emotions felt by tourists throughout the course of a vacation, the relationship between emotions and well-being, and the degree to which emotions affect decision-making behavior.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY



### Why the playful may inherit the earth

Play is a characteristic behavior of juvenile mammals, many birds, and members of a few other species. However, it is relatively rare among adults of any species with two exceptions. Adults among several domesticated species, especially cats and dogs, commonly engage in play and the other example is our own species, humans. For juveniles, play affords exercise, practice in hunting or escape from predators, and the development of social relationships. We have clearly bred cats and dogs

to play as adults because we enjoy the company of playful animals. Ongoing research focuses on how we may also have bred ourselves to be playful into adulthood. This research shows that both men and women prefer mates who are playful, have a good sense of humor, and are fun loving. To the extent that they are inheritable, these traits will then be passed on to future generations. Implications may extend to other forms of recreational behavior.

## TOURISM-SUPPORTED BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



### The social and environmental sustainability of tourism

The challenges in developing countries dictate approaches to research that differ from those employed in developed settings. RPTM faculty bring several disciplinary backgrounds to bear on challenges of natural resource use and environmental conservation, public and private protected area management, and the impacts of tourism. Ethnographic research on emerging destinations in Nicaragua has addressed how rapid development of tourism impacts community fabric as well as attitudes towards the natural environment,

resulting in the perpetuation of institutionalized cycles of capital accumulation and impoverishment. Fieldwork in Costa Rica explores how small-scale ecotourism breaks such cycles and provides more economically and environmentally sustainable livelihoods for those living around parks and protected areas. Government plans for a new international airport and Central America's largest hydro-electric project in Costa Rica, as well as an inter-oceanic canal in Nicaragua, will have immense social and environmental consequences and thus make these topics of research very timely.

## GTRC: A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO ENHANCING GOLFER PERFORMANCE

Since the Golf Teaching and Research Center's (GTRC) began in November of 2009, a multi-faceted approach has been used to explore and enhance golf instruction and research as a means to improving golfer performance. Using the golf industry's most sophisticated and innovative technologies, faculty in Penn State's GTRC can identify characteristics and possible errors that occur in a golfer's swing, equipment, and physical abilities. Some of these technologies include 3D motion capture systems, force plates, high-speed video, Doppler radar ball flight machines,

and equipment for modifying clubs. By combining university resources in various departments (PGA Golf Management, Kinesiology, Penn State Golf Courses, and Penn State Athletics) with golf industry leaders, the GTRC is able to collaborate on innovative research projects, product testing, and outreach programs. Recent research topics have included Biomechanical, ball flight, anthropometric, and athletic skill predictors of playing handicap, and the effect of varying club head mass on ball flight quality, golfer kinematics, and swing consistency.



Bringing state-of-the-art science to bear on golf

## EFFECTS OF ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

The growth in energy development on public lands has the potential to impact outdoor recreation visitation and user experiences. RPTM faculty are conducting several studies to examine these potential effects in Pennsylvania and several surrounding states. These projects, funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the National Park Service, engage both graduate and undergraduate

students in monitoring and analyzing the effects of natural gas exploration/drilling within Pennsylvania State Forests and Parks as well as the impact of power line and cell tower development from the perspective of Appalachian Trail users. Data collected through these studies will inform state and federal agency planning and development as they relate to recreation use on these public lands.



Partnering with state and federal agencies on energy policy

## PARK STUDIES UNIT

The Park Studies Unit is a team of faculty and students who design and execute studies concerning visitor capacity and visitor management in national parks and protected areas globally. The park studies unit studies the flow of people from trails to transportation through conducting visitor surveys, ecological monitoring, and spatial modeling. Over the past 12 years, we have developed a strategic research partnership with the U.S. National Park Service, Natural

Sounds and Night Skies Program as well as several National Parks to help inform management decisions. We have worked in large parks like Denali, Yosemite, Rocky Mountain, Yellowstone, Sequoia and Kings Canyon to smaller units like Muir Woods and Bandelier National Monuments. Our graduates are professors, park planners, environmental consultants and National Park Rangers from New York City to the Rocky Mountains.



Making parks a better place for all of their visitors

## HEALTHWISE SOUTH AFRICA: LIFE SKILLS FOR YOUNG ADULTS



### Teaching healthier leisure skills for young adults in South Africa

HealthWise is an intervention that teaches high school students how to use their leisure time in healthy ways as a means to prevent substance use and risky sexual behavior. The HealthWise curriculum has been provided to Grade 8 and 9 students in about 60 high schools in the Western Cape Province (SA) since 2001. HealthWise was developed by a team of researchers from the University of the Western Cape (SA)

and Penn State University. Findings demonstrated that leisure variables (e.g., boredom and motivation) as well as type of activity participation (e.g., spending time with friends) were associated with substance use and sexual risk. For example, students reporting higher levels of intrinsic motivation and lower levels of extrinsic motivation and amotivation had the lowest odds of past month cigarette, alcohol, and marijuana use.

## ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP



### Complementing classroom learning with real life experiences

Engaged scholarship is out-of-classroom academic experiences that complement classroom learning. Research finds that high-impact practices (HIPs), including out-of-class experiences like internships, study abroad, and undergraduate research, provide benefits for students. Research also finds that the way students use time outside of the classroom has significant influence on moral beliefs, health-related behaviors, academic performance, and civic engagement. The RPTM research team proposed that a cost-effective Time Diary embedded

within a large General Education class has potential to reach a diverse student demographic and to add to HIP scholarship. Enrollment was a 3-credit General Education course with 200 undergraduate students. As part of the three-phase Time Diary process, students learned how to collect valid and reliable data, and analyzed and use the data to master class concepts in a capstone reflection paper. Results revealed that self-reflection urged cognitive review of personal goals, values, attitude, and behaviors and, for some, inspired positive engagement in meaningful activities.

## VIDEO GAMES AND AUTISM



### Establishing relationships through video game mediation

Many children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) present with inadequate social interaction and communication skills leading to difficulty in establishing and maintaining relationships. While these children may struggle communicating with humans, the research team has found in previous research that these same barriers may not exist when interacting with technology. The purpose of this project is to determine if video games can be used as a mediating

device to increase communication and social interaction between children with ASD and their peers. Video games are a strong and common interest for both children with ASD and typically developing peers, offering an opportunity to play together and discuss a mutual interest. By identifying the characteristics of video games as well as video game play partners that are desirable, interventions can be designed for children with ASD to teach social skills needed for interactions during game play and beyond.



A close-up photograph of a weathered, light-brown stone sculpture of a human face. The sculpture shows signs of age and wear, with some white residue or paint splatters on its surface. The eyes are closed, and the expression is serene. A dark green horizontal bar is superimposed over the upper part of the face, containing the text "SERVICE & OUTREACH" in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

# SERVICE & OUTREACH

## SERVICE AND OUTREACH

### HOW WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Service to the department, college and university is central to life as a faculty member. In addition, RTPM faculty believe in a moral obligation to provide service and outreach to communities and professional organizations. RTPM students are encouraged to provide service to others.

RTPM faculty make a difference in their service and outreach efforts by:

- providing content expertise to local, state, national, and international organizations
- engaging in leadership capacities in numerous organizations, such as the Travel and Tourism Research Association, Academy of Leisure Services, the World Leisure Association, the National Recreation and Park Association and the Society for Applied Anthropology
- serving as reviewers or on editorial boards for a wide scope of journals, including Leisure Sciences, Journal of Leisure Research, Prevention Science, Environment and Behavior, Journal of Sustainable Tourism, Annals of Tourism Research, Tourism Management, Journal of Travel Research, Tourism Analysis, Journal of Park and Recreation Administration, and Environmental Management

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE: SHAVER'S CREEK ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER

Shaver's Creek Environmental Center can be found between State College and Huntingdon, Pennsylvania in the Stone Valley Recreation Area. This is part of the Penn State Experimental Forest. The Center operates on 7,000 acres (28 km<sup>2</sup>) and contains 72-acre (290,000 m<sup>2</sup>), freshwater Lake Perez. Each year more than 100,000 people visit the Center, which is open daily from February 1-December 15 (excluding Thanksgiving). The Environmental Center contains an amphitheater, classrooms, Welcome Center and Pennsylvania Nature Book and Gift Shop, herb and flower gardens; picnic areas, raptor center, and other displays and exhibits. The Center describes its mission as follows: "Shaver's Creek Environmental Center is committed to extending the University's Outreach mission of instruction, service, and research. Through quality programs, we teach, model, and provide the knowledge, values, skills, experiences, and dedication that enable individuals and communities to achieve and maintain harmony between human activities and the natural systems that support all living species."



## MAKING A DIFFERENCE: STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

It is very important for recreation professionals to have the knowledge and skills to plan a large scale event. Students gain invaluable hands-on experience in the Programming in Recreation and Leisure Services class as they collaborate with a local non-profit, state park, community or campus organization to plan, promote, implement and evaluate a three-hour long event. Twenty different student run events occur annually, each with between 50 and 1,000 participants in attendance!

The event themes and populations served vary by team. Some examples include: Nature in a Nutshell for home-schoolers, Earth Day Birthday and Vintage Baseball for the community, Amazing Race Americana for veterans and their children, Stress Free to the Tee youth golf clinic, and late night sports tournaments for college students.

This engaged learning opportunity requires students to design creative community events, work in a team, consult with professionals in the field, and juggle many moving pieces. Although demanding, students find these experiences rewarding and beneficial to their professional development.





## Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management

The Pennsylvania State University  
801 Donald H. Ford Building  
University Park, PA 16802  
814-865-1851

[www.hhd.psu.edu/rptm](http://www.hhd.psu.edu/rptm)  
[rptm@psu.edu](mailto:rptm@psu.edu)

### RPTM Faculty

**Linda Caldwell**  
*Professor*  
[lindac@psu.edu](mailto:lindac@psu.edu)

**Garry Chick**  
*Professor*  
[gchick@psu.edu](mailto:gchick@psu.edu)

**John Dattilo**  
*Professor*  
[jxd8@psu.edu](mailto:jxd8@psu.edu)

**Alan Graefe**  
*Professor*  
[gyu@psu.edu](mailto:gyu@psu.edu)

**Eric Handley**  
*Instructor*  
[esh12@psu.edu](mailto:esh12@psu.edu)

**Benjamin D. Hickerson**  
*Assistant Professor*  
[bdh14@psu.edu](mailto:bdh14@psu.edu)

**Camilla Hodge**  
*Assistant Professor*  
[cjhodge@psu.edu](mailto:cjhodge@psu.edu)

**Carter A. Hunt**  
*Assistant Professor*  
[cahunt@psu.edu](mailto:cahunt@psu.edu)

**Deborah Kerstetter**  
*Professor and Professor-in-Charge  
of Graduate Studies*  
[debk@psu.edu](mailto:debk@psu.edu)

**Patricia Kleban**  
*Undergraduate Coordinator, Senior Instructor*  
[plk4@psu.edu](mailto:plk4@psu.edu)

**Stephanie (Stevie) Lovell**  
*Instructor*  
[ssl1@psu.edu](mailto:ssl1@psu.edu)

**Andrew Mowen**  
*Associate Professor and Professor-in-Charge of  
Honors Programs, RPTM*  
[amowen@psu.edu](mailto:amowen@psu.edu)

**Peter Newman**  
*Department Head/Professor*  
[pbn3@psu.edu](mailto:pbn3@psu.edu)

**Kathleen Raupach**  
*Instructor*  
[kjr103@psu.edu](mailto:kjr103@psu.edu)

**Brian Soule'**  
*Instructor*  
[bjs48@psu.edu](mailto:bjs48@psu.edu)

**Derrick Taff**  
*Assistant Professor*  
[bdt3@psu.edu](mailto:bdt3@psu.edu)

**Burch Wilkes**  
*Senior Instructor and Director, PGA Golf  
Management (PGM) Program*  
[gbw104@psu.edu](mailto:gbw104@psu.edu)

**Careen Yarnal**  
*Associate Professor*  
[cmy122@psu.edu](mailto:cmy122@psu.edu)

### RPTM Staff

**Gennifer Diebler**  
*Budget Assistant*  
[gjb9@psu.edu](mailto:gjb9@psu.edu)

**Darla Houseman**  
*PGM Staff Assistant*  
[djh32@psu.edu](mailto:djh32@psu.edu)

**Lori Coup**  
*Student Services Assistant*  
[lks163@psu.edu](mailto:lks163@psu.edu)

**Meredith Chaney**  
*Undergraduate Student Advisor*  
[mac178@psu.edu](mailto:mac178@psu.edu)

**Melissa Strouse**  
*Administrative Specialist and Assistant to Dept.  
Head / Graduate Program Assistant*  
[mvs5@psu.edu](mailto:mvs5@psu.edu)