

Cathi McMahan, Ph.D.
National Recreation and Parks Association Conference and Expo
St. Louis, MO
October 5-8, 2016

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Abstract:

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) Congress and Expo is an annual conference and trade show. The event was attended by well over 4,000 recreation and park professionals, students, and faculty members. It served as an excellent opportunity to network with recreation and park professionals in the field and faculty. This conference provides the opportunity to recruit potential work experience and internship sites for the ATU Recreation and Parks Program. There were also a number of educational sessions that focused specifically on the Council on Accreditation of Parks Recreation, Tourism, and Related Professions Accreditation Standards. These educational sessions were very much of interest and importance to me as our RPA program is an accredited program and it appears that the accreditation standards are changing rapidly. I also took a group of 6 RP students to the conference; this allows the students to gain knowledge about their chosen profession and seek opportunities for work experience and internship.

Restatement of problem researched, creative work, or professional enhancement opportunity:

The National Recreation and Parks Association is a membership organization for recreation and park professionals, students, and university/college faculty throughout the United States and abroad. The Conference and Expo is an annual event offering over 300 educational sessions, numerous networking opportunities, and boast an expo hall with 500 to 600 vendors with the latest and greatest in parks and recreation supplies, equipment and technology. The purpose of this trip was to attend educational sessions (especially sessions focusing on COAPRT accreditation and higher education), network with professionals, engage with practicing professionals and secure work experience and internship sites for ATU RP students, and to recruit for and promote Arkansas Tech University. Also to attend the NRPA Department Chairs annual meeting.

Brief review of the professional enhancement opportunity, creative work, or research procedure:

I attended the 2016 National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Annual Conference and Expo for a number of reasons. First and foremost; I attended all educational sessions that focused on the COAPRT Accreditation Standards – which was imperative due to our RPA Program being the only accredited program in the state of Arkansas. Secondly; I attended the NRPA Congress and Expo to seek information pertaining to the latest trends and issues in the Recreation and Park profession and also in higher education. And last but not least; I had the opportunity to network with professionals in the field and secured a number of contacts for potential work

experience and internship opportunities for our RPA students. All in all, the trip was very successful!

Summary of findings, outcomes, or experiences:

Attend and participate in the 2016 NRPA Conference and Expo in St. Louis, MO.
Attend all educational sessions focusing on COAPRT Accreditation Standards and network with others higher education faculty while attending these sessions.
Attend social events while at the Congress in order to meet professionals in the field to talk about work experience and internship opportunities for our students.
Met a number of RP faculty and administrators from various RP Programs throughout the United States.
Promote the Arkansas Tech University Recreation and Park Administration Program.

Conclusion and recommendations:

I utilized the information and knowledge gained from attending the 2016 NRPA Conference and Expo in a number of ways: first and foremost, I utilized the information and knowledge gained to stay current with COAPRT Accreditation standards and to improve the ATU RPA Program. I feel the knowledge gained from attending the educational sessions contributes to keeping our RPA Program current. I also feel that by attending the NRPA Congress and Expo I was able to promote ATU and our RPA Program and to stay current with the most recent issues and trends in the field.