

Dustin, D., & Goodale, T. (Eds.). (2007). *Making a difference in academic life: A handbook for Park, Recreation, and Tourism educators and graduate students*.

State College, PA: Venture Publishing.

Number of pages: 314; Book Price: \$49.95; ISBN-10: 1-892132-73-7

Vinod Sasidharan

Recreation and Tourism Management Program

School of Hospitality and Tourism Management

San Diego State University

This book is a well-crafted collection of essays pertinent to the academic, professional, and personal lives of educators and aspiring scholars in the field of recreation, parks, and tourism. Each of the three parts of the book highlights the unparalleled spirit of academic freedom by chronicling the scholarly, administrative, and service efforts of some of the most influential personalities in the field. The amalgam of a variety of narratives and introspective essays reveals the multifaceted dimensions, including opportunities and challenges of academic life. The presentation of diverse perspectives relating to certain fundamental issues faced by professors and administrators at all stages of their respective academic careers has timeless significance. What prompts one to pursue an academic career in this field? What are the paths that others have taken in their scholarly and administrative endeavors? How does one make an impact in the field's academic arena? What are the responsibilities and obligations of professors and administrators in the educational realm of the field? What are the rewards (and misgivings) of academic life? Throughout the book, these central questions and inquiries are addressed through a refreshing and inspirational array of first-hand testimonials and recollections obtained from leading academic contributors in the field of recreation parks, tourism, and leisure studies.

The interlacing of self-reflective nuggets with factual commentaries by exemplary scholars and academic professionals may not resonate with the immediate sentiments of graduate students and aspiring professionals. At the same time, the anthology of introspective and mindful essays and insights provided by the field's established scholars and administrative leaders shed light on the truths and fallacies regarding the nature and meaning of academic life. The essays represent the evolutionary characteristic of a professor's academic commitment, i.e., the continuity of "beginning" and "being," throughout the tenure-process and beyond. In Part I, "On Being a Professor," issues related to the teacher-scholar model, as it applies to the scope of a professor's development goals—teaching, research, writing, and service—are examined through the professional lenses of academics at various stages of their careers. The rewards, frustrations, and demands associated with professional commitment to academic responsibilities and scholarship are also detailed, thereby, adding realistic value and meaning to the efforts of budding researchers and scholars. Part II, "For the Good of the Order," explores the underpinnings of academic administration within the field including the motivations

of, and challenges faced by those involved in academic leadership. The personality and management traits required of an effective administrator, as well as professional obligations, of administrative leaders within the academic realm are also illustrated in this section of the book.

The book (Parts I and II) summarizes two prior works, *Beyond Promotion and Tenure: On Being a Professor* and *For the Good of the Order: Administering Academic Programs in Higher Education* through a careful selection and presentation of essential representative essays from the texts. The summary of the two texts provides a vital context for Part III, "Making a Difference." The contributors of essays appearing in Part III justify their passion for academia while addressing the role of both personal as well as professional hurdles, misgivings, and insecurities presented to all those who persistently strive for excellence in their scholarship, research, and administrative undertakings. In this section, the narratives and anecdotes offered by a cross-section of leading scholars and administrators provide glimpses into the internal turmoil and self-doubt experienced by the individuals in the course of their relentless pursuit for professional growth and development within the field. In addition, the overwhelming evidence of professional and personal satisfaction experienced in academic life, as exemplified in the essays in this section, will (continue to) inspire readers, future scholars, and administrative leaders.

Making a Difference in Academic Life is an essential text for both current and future scholars, researchers, and administrators in the academic domain of recreation, parks, and tourism. The insightful essays, testimonials, and anecdotes are not only eye-opening with regard to the true meaning and essence of academic life, but also serve as inspirational yardsticks of self-evaluation for educators, in specific stages of their academic careers within the discipline.

References

- Dustin, D. L. (Ed.) (1990). *Beyond promotion and tenure: On being a professor*. San Diego, CA: Institute for Leisure Behavior.
- Dustin, D. L. (Ed.) (1993). *For the good of the order: Administering academic programs in higher education*. San Diego, CA: Institute for Leisure Behavior.