
The Future of Leisure Studies in Research Universities

Administrators' Perspectives

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Abstract

This article summarizes the content of a three-day administrative summit held at Zion Ponderosa Resort in southern Utah in late September 2010. Department chairs, heads, and deans representing 13 universities across North America offering leisure studies doctoral degrees, master's degrees, and undergraduate professional preparation degrees gathered to entertain eight multifaceted questions pertaining to their future. The questions were generated by a Delphi Process, and responses to the questions were recorded and analyzed following the summit by a team of doctoral students and professors from the University of Utah. The article concludes with a brief discussion of an administrator's responsibility in leading leisure studies departments in times of fiscal austerity, and recommending a "to-do" list to ensure the future of leisure studies in public research universities.

KEYWORDS: *Academic mission, change, collaboration, collective identity, money*

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The Future of Leisure Studies in Research Universities: Administrators' Perspectives*

In a recent article in *Leisure Sciences*, Karla Henderson discussed the state of leisure studies in higher education (Henderson, 2010). She characterized leisure studies as being in a perpetual state of crisis, and she went to great lengths to examine the nature of that crisis. Among her many observations, Henderson noted that the crisis may, in fact, be a residual feeling stemming from ongoing critical self-examination that is essential to the growth and development of any academic field of study. From this perspective, talk of “the sky falling” can be interpreted as an unfortunate byproduct of critical self-reflection. Indeed, Henderson left her readers with the impression that the field’s scholars, educators, and practitioners have it in their power to move beyond crisis mode to create a preferred future for leisure studies, if only they would put their collective minds to it.

Exacerbating the crisis in leisure studies is a much larger financial crisis afflicting public universities in general. This crisis is rooted in a substantial decline in taxpayer support for public higher education (Lederman, 2010), and in corresponding pressure on university administrators to make the educational enterprise more self-sustaining. This neoliberal atmosphere (Rose & Dustin, 2009) is manifested in unsettling conversations about what departments and disciplines are indispensable to the university’s core academic mission and what departments and disciplines are most able to generate revenue for the university’s coffers. Historically, departments of leisure studies have neither fared well in discussions of academic centrality nor have they been successful in bringing large sums of money into the university.

Administrator Summit

The crisis in leisure studies and the larger public university funding crisis provided the impetus for gathering administrators representing North America’s departments of parks, recreation, and tourism in public research universities to discuss how to sustain the future of leisure studies. The gathering was hosted by the University of Utah’s Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism at Zion Ponderosa Resort in southern Utah September 23–26, 2010. While many more such departments exist in undergraduate teaching-oriented universities, their focus is primarily on the professional preparation of undergraduate majors. The summit’s organizers (department heads from the University of Utah and the University of Illinois, and Clemson University’s Dean of the College of Health, Education and Human Development) felt that graduate research-oriented universities are confronted with their own particular administrative challenges; therefore, the summit was largely limited to them. Invitations were

*The following universities were represented at the summit: Arizona State University, Brigham Young University (offering Bachelors and Masters degrees only), Clemson University, Indiana University, North Carolina State University, Oklahoma State University, San Francisco State University (offering Bachelors and Masters degrees only), Texas A & M University, The Pennsylvania State University, University of Alberta, University of Florida, University of Georgia, University of Illinois, University of Texas (sport management), University of Utah, and the University of Waterloo.

extended to department chairs, heads, and deans offering doctoral programs in leisure studies throughout North America as well as to a small group of senior professors with considerable administrative experience in research universities. Additional invitations were extended to selected external constituents, including a senior professor from the field of sport management, the president of the Society of Park and Recreation Educators, the incoming president of the Academy of Leisure Sciences, the executive director of Utah's Recreation and Park Association, and the executive director of the National Recreation and Park Association. Faculty and doctoral students from the University of Utah were also included in the summit, resulting in 39 participants.

Summit Agenda

In advance of the summit, the organizers conducted an informal Delphi Process among the invitees to identify the most pressing questions relating to the future of leisure studies in public research universities. That process yielded the following eight sets of questions, around which the summit was organized:

1. What are we about as a field of study? Where is, and what is, the intellectual content of what we do? What, if anything, holds us together? Are we okay "as is," or would we be better off attaching ourselves to other disciplines and departments?
2. What is the nature of the contemporary public research university within which we work? How is it changing in significant ways? What do we need to do to ensure our continued existence in this research-oriented academic community?
3. How can we best position ourselves to succeed in research universities? How best to collaborate and partner with allied disciplines and departments? Is "health" the emerging paradigm within which to define and justify our intellectual contributions? How best to create revenue streams to sustain us?
4. How can we do a better job of guarding against insular interiority? Our journals are not widely read. Are we just talking to ourselves? How best to integrate our scholarship into broader contexts? How best to demonstrate our social relevance?
5. How can we best prepare our doctoral students for life in the professoriate or in related careers?
6. How best to manage graduate/undergraduate program offerings? If the undergraduate program "fuels" the graduate program, what are the implications for how we go about our business?
7. How best to manage faculty workloads? Should faculty members be held more accountable for what they study and what they teach? Should there be more cohesion or unity in what different faculties do to ensure their uniqueness and indispensability to the higher education enterprise?
8. Where do we go from here?

Methods

The questions reflected what is currently occupying administrators' minds as they chart their departments' paths in research universities. The questions generated through the Delphi Process were discussed in eight one and one-half hour formal sessions. Each session was facilitated by a team of three administrators who had expressed particular interest in that session's question(s). Teams of doctoral students in attendance were

charged with writing down the gist of each session's conversation to provide a cross-check of the important points made. Participants in the summit understood that what they had to say would be shared publicly, but that they would not be identified personally. Upon conclusion of the summit, a team of two Utah professors and ten doctoral students met to discuss the summit's conversations, triangulate impressions, and agree upon the main points made in each of the eight sessions. The team also interpreted the implications of what was said at the summit for the future of leisure studies in research universities across North America.

Before reporting the results, we remind the reader that the gathering was not a sample of leisure studies administrators as much as it was a population of administrators. With only a few exceptions, all administrators of doctoral degree-granting programs in leisure studies in the United States and Canada were present. Consequently, what we report here is not a generalization of findings from a sample to a population, but findings from the population itself.

Discussion of Results

1. *What are we about as a field of study? Where is, and what is, the intellectual content of what we do? What, if anything, holds us together? Are we okay "as is," or would we be better off attaching ourselves to other disciplines and departments?*

Forty years ago, B. L. Driver observed that "educational and research institutions tend to organize themselves into disciplines. The real world tends to carve itself up into problems. Sometimes the two are coincident; most frequently they are not" (Driver, 1972). Driver's observation resonates to this day as evidenced by the content of this first conversation. On the one hand, administrators preoccupy themselves with the question of how to position their departments within institutions of higher learning so as to demonstrate their centrality to the institution's overall academic mission. On the other hand, those same administrators are often hard pressed to define exactly who they are and what it is they do in support of that mission. The proliferation of sub-specializations within leisure studies over several decades has led to fragmentation, factionalism, and frustration that exacerbate this state of affairs. The challenge is to draw parameters around leisure studies that clearly differentiate what this academic field has to offer that others do not, and to articulate what leisure studies contribute to the resolution of society's pressing social and environmental problems that other academic fields do not.

This definitional conundrum led to considerable discussion and debate among the administrators regarding the content of leisure studies. Several individuals pointed out that graduate programs in leisure studies are largely devoid of content, and that graduate students are often directed elsewhere in the university in pursuit of relevant subject matter. Other participants felt that because leisure studies is an applied area of inquiry, it is entirely appropriate and desirable for leisure studies students to concentrate on allied subjects for much of their advanced education. That leisure studies might be content "weak" led still others in the room to conclude that the field's scholars might be better off attaching themselves to well-established parent disciplines in the social and behavioral sciences.

Given what appears to be its highly interdisciplinary nature, the question of what holds leisure studies together was also discussed in detail. All participants felt that

leisure is the “glue” that gives form and substance to what we study. At the same time, many discussants felt that what we study about leisure represents only a fraction of what actually goes on in the name of leisure, and that leisure studies does not really do justice to the word *leisure*. Still others felt that leisure studies’ historically strong ties to professional practice limit the field’s intellectual horizons. These limitations manifest themselves in a variety of ways, but most telling is the profession’s inclination to see and talk about itself in positive terms only, with little apparent capacity for critical self-reflection. Participants felt that critical self-reflection is essential to the growth and development of leisure studies (Samdahl, 2000). Additionally, as the parent professional organization, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), narrows its focus to municipal public parks and recreation, several administrators felt that NRPA is less relevant to what leisure studies entails, especially at the graduate level. Echoes of Rabel Burdge’s “The coming separation of leisure studies from parks and recreation education,” reverberated throughout the summit (Burdge, 1985), and talk of a separate professional association to replace the recently disbanded Society of Park and Recreation Educators (SPRE) was prevalent.

Although participants made little progress on the question of articulating a “collective identity” for the field (other than holding firm to the notion that leisure should be at its core), there was general agreement that higher education’s future will be increasingly devoid of academic professionalism and territorialism. The administrators speculated that out of the ashes more interdisciplinary, problem-based collaborations will arise. This prospect is congruent with Driver’s observation that the world beyond the university carves itself up into problems, and that meaningful solutions to those problems will require something other than traditional academic configurations (Taylor, 2009, April 26). In such a future, most everyone agreed that leisure studies scholars will have to be nimble and quick on their feet. They will make their contributions as interdisciplinary team members organized around pressing social and environmental challenges. There will be little room for the faint of heart or for leisure studies scholars who are unsure of, or insecure about, what they have to offer the larger society. Self-confidence and highly refined expertise will be required.

2. *What is the nature of the contemporary public research university within which we work? How is it changing in significant ways? What do we need to do to ensure our continued existence in this research academic community?*

The reality within which administrators in public research universities work suggests the term *public* is less and less descriptive of the contemporary academic milieu. Many such public universities receive only a fraction of their budget from the state (Clark, August 19, 2009). Consequently, universities have to be in the revenue-generating business if they are to stay afloat. A money-driven mind-set percolates down through the administrative hierarchy until it settles squarely on the shoulders of department chairs. This is a particularly difficult situation for individuals who oversee leisure studies departments, because they do not have the luxury of relying on large federal funding sources so typical of the natural sciences. While a few leisure studies scholars have experienced a modicum of success with NIH-level research grants, they have been the exception rather than the rule.

How to deal with this pressure to turn professors into “economic developers” was on everyone’s mind, and opinions varied from institution to institution as to what exactly should be done about it. There did seem to be a begrudging acceptance among administrators that externally funded research and writing are expected increasingly at research universities, and that the trend is unidirectional and going up. How this will ultimately affect faculty morale, productivity expectations, teaching loads, and the nature of academic life in general, were all topics of intense discussion and debate. While there was a strong feeling that scholarship should be evaluated separately from external funding, participants were also reminded that the most expedient and efficient way to ensure the future of graduate-oriented academic programs in leisure studies is to “follow the money.”

This session illustrated starkly the political economy (Chick, 1997) and neoliberal climate (Rose & Dustin, 2009) within which department chairs at research universities operate. While adhering to their academic idealism, today’s administrators must be cognizant of declining public support for higher education and all that implies for the day-to-day management of their departments and programs. A department chair cannot afford to be economically and politically naïve when conducting her or his department’s business. Department chairs must be effective “bean counters” and academic visionaries at the same time, however discomfiting the dual roles.

3. *How can we best position ourselves to succeed in research universities? How best to collaborate and partner with allied disciplines and departments? Is “health” the emerging paradigm within which to define and justify our intellectual contributions? How best to create revenue streams to sustain us?*

This session focused on how to generate income for departments, with strategies ranging from new and innovative ways to ramp up student credit hour production through general education courses and distance education to enhancing grant writing, strengthening collaborative relationships, and building partnerships with allied disciplines and departments who are better positioned to secure outside resources to support the academic enterprise. Once again, the overarching theme was how to “follow the money” while remaining true to individual interests and academic missions.

Participants agreed that leisure studies departments in research universities should capitalize on the preventive and rehabilitative power of recreation in the context of health and wellness promotion. At the same time, there was considerable debate about the readiness of the larger society to acknowledge leisure studies’ contributions to the resolution of major health care problems. One individual felt that the medical profession “owns” health, while others felt that is no longer the case.

Whether “health” is the emerging paradigm within which leisure studies must demonstrate its relevance remains an open question, but there was strong sentiment among the summit’s attendees for making the field’s case in the context of health and wellness promotion. Indeed, several participants suggested that “the worm has turned,” and that what heretofore has been a skeptical view of leisure’s contributory potential to health and wellness promotion is now increasingly seen as a practical and cost effective alternative to failed medical approaches.

The onus is on leisure studies scholars to step outside their comfort zones and proactively seek interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary

collaborations with allied health professionals in other disciplines and departments. This is not a time to be meek or undervalue what leisure studies has to offer. The challenge, as one administrator put it, is to create a sense of dependency on what leisure studies can contribute to academic units across campus. Leisure studies scholars increasingly are obliged to demonstrate the indispensability of the work they do to the interests of the larger university.

4. *How can we do a better job of guarding against insular interiority? Our journals are not widely read. Are we just talking to ourselves? How best to integrate our scholarship into broader contexts? How best to demonstrate our social relevance?*

While considerable time was spent reassuring each other that leisure studies scholarship is more widely read than it is typically given credit for, several individuals emphasized the nuts and bolts of ensuring that leisure studies journals are better indexed for citation purposes as well as encouraging the development of new journals that better link leisure studies to important themes like active living, health and wellness promotion, sustainability, and social and environmental justice. The time is ripe for leisure studies scholars to seek a more diverse array of outlets for their work.

Participants were also challenged to think creatively about preparing students to be effective translators of leisure studies scholarship into forms that are more accessible to the general reading and viewing public. If leisure studies scholars want to secure the support of the citizenry for their work, they must communicate the relevance of that work in ways the general public can easily relate to and internalize. Paradoxically, this requires more adept communication skills, because it means jettisoning professional jargon and replacing it with language that resonates with people of all ages and all education levels. This challenge also necessitates thinking outside the box and developing innovative strategies to undo entrenched attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that limit the general public's understanding of, and appreciation for, the role leisure plays in contemporary life.

Finally, participants agreed that one of the most pressing needs facing leisure studies scholars is to demonstrate the relevance of their work by applying it to the resolution of local social and environmental problems. University academic departments often distance themselves from their surrounding community, and leisure studies departments that detach themselves this way do so at some risk. Developing a support network composed of informed citizens, community activists, and social agencies who are dedicated to community-building, and who appreciate leisure services' contributions to community-building, is critical to leisure studies' sustainability. This means establishing community connections along a wide spectrum of individuals and agencies well beyond the campus.

5. *How can we best prepare our doctoral students for life in the professoriate or in related careers?*

After sitting patiently through four sessions devoted primarily to the question of how to right a "sinking ship," administrators gave doctoral students a pep talk about academic life. Students were reminded that administrators, independent of their idealism, have to pay attention to practical matters, including meeting a

payroll, supporting faculty travel, and providing graduate assistantships, among other budgetary (or financial) concerns. To then segue into a discussion of academe as the “good life” was a transition almost too much for some graduate students to bear. Nonetheless, it was evident in the ensuing conversation that not all research universities are alike, and that some universities are more balanced than others when it comes to the relationship between a professor's life and “economic development.”

The administrators also reiterated that even though today's doctoral students receive a thorough grounding in social science research methodology in preparation for a life in higher education, the vast majority of them will end up in undergraduate-oriented teaching universities. This raised the question of whether more room should be made in doctoral programs of study for coursework in teaching pedagogy, and whether doctoral students should be given more hands-on experiences in teaching, student advising, internship supervision, and a host of other responsibilities attendant to life in undergraduate-oriented teaching colleges and universities.

The doctoral students came away from this session with a better understanding of the differences between faculty appointments in research universities and faculty appointments in teaching universities. They also came away with a better appreciation for the changing climate within which contemporary universities operate, and a better sense for the likelihood that no matter where they end up working, there is no guarantee that the ground rules for success will not change (Dubrow, Moseley, & Dustin, 2006).

6. *How best to manage graduate/undergraduate program offerings? If the undergraduate program “fuels” the graduate program, what are the implications for how we go about our business?*

The reputation of leisure studies in research universities is built on the backs of faculty members who engage in scholarship and highly accomplished graduate students who work under their supervision. What is often overlooked in this seemingly symbiotic relationship is the fact that graduate program quality is frequently underwritten by undergraduate student tuition dollars. To the extent that administrators lose sight of this financial dependency, they do so at their graduate program's peril.

The challenge for this session was how to handle this graduate/undergraduate financial relationship. The tendency to treat undergraduate students as mere numbers while dotting on graduate students is all too common in research universities. The summit's administrators acknowledged the problem and focused the discussion on how to manage this uneasy alliance. Administrators agreed that despite Burdge's distant call for a separation of leisure studies from parks and recreation education (Burdge, 1985), most graduate programs in leisure studies could not sustain themselves without an undergraduate parks, recreation, and tourism degree program. Left untended, the administrators also agreed that the quality of their undergraduate professional preparation programs could be jeopardized and that declining undergraduate enrollment would likely be the price to pay. The rippling effects from a downturn in undergraduate enrollment would then likely jeopardize the quality of the graduate program. The administrators understood this potentiality and vowed to make sure it would not happen in their departments.

Somewhat paradoxically, the summit's participants were equally aware that they serve at the pleasure of administrators above them, that their departments exist at the pleasure of these same administrators, and that, like it or not, they must pay attention to what the administration values. In research universities, deans, academic vice presidents, provosts, and presidents typically value national reputations stemming from national rankings based on scholarly productivity fueled by externally funded research dollars. In this rarefied academic atmosphere, the quality of undergraduate professional preparation programs is commonly taken for granted. The irony in this session was in the realization that department chairs can ill afford to take those same undergraduate professional preparation programs for granted lest they threaten the sustainability of their national reputation at the graduate level.

The session's concluding sentiment was that department chairs in research universities must resist the temptation to neglect their undergraduate professional preparation program offerings; indeed, they must ensure that both undergraduate and graduate students are equally well served. Despite the research university's emphasis on graduate education, the administrative mandate must be to do justice to both levels (see Dustin, Browne, Bricker, & Schwab, 2011).

7. *How best to manage faculty workloads? Should faculty members be held more accountable for what they study and what they teach? Should there be more cohesion or unity in what different faculties do to ensure their uniqueness and indispensability to the higher education enterprise?*

The question of how to manage an academic department so as to maximize its utility to the larger university is a complicated one. Ideally, department chairs want to capitalize on faculty members' unique talents in ways that allow them to deliver the highest quality teaching, scholarship, and service. If a department were evaluated as a whole based on its collective output, department chairs would be in a much better position to assign differentiated workloads to faculty members to take advantage of their individual strengths while minimizing their weaknesses (Wellman, Dustin, Sharik, & Schleien, 2006). Unfortunately, institutional reward structures discourage such practices. Especially in research universities, scholarship is weighted more heavily than teaching and service, and assigning a teaching professor a heavier teaching load while assigning a research professor a heavier research load does not translate into an equitable distribution of rewards. Indeed, a teaching professor will likely interpret his or her heavier teaching load as "punishment" for not publishing, while a research professor will likely be reinforced in her or his thinking that teaching only gets in the way of what is expected of professors in research universities. Neither scenario bodes well for students in the classroom.

A few participants challenged the group to resist thinking of teaching, scholarship, and service as separate endeavors, and to reject the notion that one individual cannot be highly accomplished in all three areas. They suggested that the ideal professor does justice to the tripartite responsibility, and that the goal should be to recognize the symbiotic nature of teaching, scholarship, and service, and to encourage faculty members to strive to achieve it (Dustin & Goodale, 2007). Other participants, while bowing to this ideal, returned to the practical reality that administrators must manage

a highly diverse group of faculty members whose strengths and weaknesses are varied, and that the administrative challenge is really how to get the most out of what you have to work with.

The conversation about how to maximize faculty productivity culminated in a discussion of mentoring. What, if anything, do senior professors owe junior professors? Should senior professors carry proportionately more of the workload so junior professors can focus on what needs to be done to secure a lifetime contract? The sentiment among administrators was that senior professors do indeed have a mentoring responsibility, and that they should assist junior faculty members as much as they can. The administrators concluded that the ideal departmental culture is a nurturing one. Faculty members should try to help one another succeed, and they should delight in each other's accomplishments. The administrators also conceded that building such a nurturing culture is a daunting challenge under the best of circumstances.

8. *Where do we go from here?*

The final session was devoted primarily to a discussion of the relationship between leisure studies departments in research universities and NRPA. Much of the dialogue consisted of a give and take between the administrators and NRPA's executive director. NRPA had just concluded a major overhaul of its organizational structure, and participants wanted to discuss the reorganization's impact on the educational community's *esprit de corps* as well as on their future involvement in NRPA. The executive director told the group that the replacement of SPRE with an education network was carried out with the best interests of NRPA in mind, and that little would be lost in the bargain. She also reminded the group that all of NRPA's branches had been dissolved and there was no particular targeting of SPRE.

The session, and the summit, wound down with the realization that NRPA and leisure studies departments in research universities live in different worlds and answer to different masters. At the same time, NRPA and academic departments of leisure studies should be united by a common cause and should develop new ways of collaborating in support of the park, recreation, and tourism profession. Recognizing that research universities exist in large part to produce new knowledge, and that there is an ongoing need for new knowledge upon which to base professional practice, NRPA's executive director and the academic administrators concluded the conversation with the mutual understanding that their collective future should be characterized by increased cooperation and collaboration in service of the leisure ideal.

The Future of Leisure Studies in Research Universities

The administrator summit at Zion Ponderosa Resort was illuminating in several respects. First and foremost, it illustrated the nature of the department chair's job in research universities across North America. While there are some differences in the academic climate within which Canadian and U. S. administrators operate, they are, by and large, kindred spirits. No matter where they are housed, department chairs are expected to give up, or at least modify, their personal agendas for the sake of a larger commitment to the welfare of faculty, staff, and students. They are expected to do this at a time when public support for higher education is on the wane, and

when resources to drive the academic enterprise come increasingly from beyond the university. Without any particular training, administration is thrust upon them, and they are expected to represent the interests of the faculty to the larger university while simultaneously representing the larger university's interests to the faculty. Department chairs live in a nether world, and they are often pulled in opposite directions. They have what was described by one of the deans attending the summit as the hardest job in the university.

Professors who accept the mantle of academic leadership find themselves at the helm leading their faculties through the turbulent waters of contemporary higher education, waters made all the more choppy by the political economy and neoliberal forces that are changing the very nature of public research universities (Rose & Dustin, 2009). They must resist the temptation to treat students and faculty alike as if they were mere factors of production, and they must resist the temptation to reduce almost everything else to the equivalent of numbers that can be measured, weighed, counted, and assigned a dollar value. They must retain their academic idealism and vision, even as the "bean counter" within does its work. Under the circumstances, it is easy for administrators to grow cynical, but good administrators manage to keep their heads about them and maintain a healthy perspective on academic life.

In the end, if administrators of leisure studies departments in research universities do their utmost to keep abreast of the constantly changing tides upon which they float their academic "boats," and if they remain open to new ways of thinking and acting on behalf of the students they are ferrying, they have it within their power to chart a course that will allow their faculties to play a leading role in the future of higher education. If anything was clear at the administrator summit, it was the absolute necessity to be bold and confident about leisure's role in enhancing the quality of life, and articulating that role in a way that can be appreciated by high level administrators of research universities as well as the public at large.

An Academic "To-Do" List

In addition to the summit's spirited dialogue, participants felt it was important to leave Utah with a to-do list to help guarantee the future of leisure studies in public research universities. To that end, the following eight recommendations flow from the summit's proceedings:

- 1. Articulate our collective identity.** We must decide who we are, what we do, and what our body of knowledge is. We must communicate what distinguishes us from other academic fields of study, and what it is that only we can offer to the resolution of pressing social and environmental problems.
- 2. Create a proactive entrepreneurial spirit among faculty.** We must break down barriers associated with academic territorialism and turf protection. We must create cross-campus relationships that better tie us to the larger university. We must better organize faculty expertise to address social and environmental problems. We must "follow the money" in ways that benefit us without compromising our mission and value. In sum, we must think outside the box more effectively. We must better anticipate where the public research university is headed, and then get in front of it.

- 3. Build strategic alliances.** We must inculcate a sense of dependency on what we have to offer in other academic units across campus and in other organizations beyond campus. We must meet, partner, and work with allied others, which requires stepping down from the ivory tower and getting out into the local community. This requires knowing who we are and what we do and then setting out to act on that knowledge in ways that make a positive difference in the lives of our stakeholders.
- 4. Demonstrate leisure studies' relevance to the resolution of social and environmental problems.** We must do a better job of illustrating the relevance of our work to the resolution of social and environmental problems locally, regionally, and nationally. We must reach a wider audience with our work, and we must teach our students how to broadcast the relevance of what we do to the public at large.
- 5. Better educate tomorrow's professoriate.** We must ensure that tomorrow's professors will be prepared adequately to function in a fast-paced, rapidly changing, and increasingly complex world. We must mentor and empower them to be highly capable thinkers, scholars, teachers, and collaborators. We must also model that for them in our own work.
- 6. Strengthen the undergraduate/graduate program relationship.** We must bridge the divide between undergraduate professional preparation programs in parks, recreation, and tourism and graduate leisure studies programs in ways that honor them both. We must convert this "marriage" of economic convenience into something more symbiotic, something more sustainable.
- 7. Maximize faculty productivity.** We must do a better job of getting the most out of our faculty members. We must make workloads fair and equitable. We must fashion a reward system that nurtures excellent teaching, excellent scholarship, and excellent service. This means cultivating a collegial atmosphere in which all of our members can find meaning, purpose, and the satisfaction of a job well done.
- 8. Nurture professional affiliations.** The relevance of leisure studies rests in its demonstrated capacity to generate new knowledge that helps solve problems in the world of professional practice. This requires being tuned in to that world and its needs and responding accordingly. And that requires proximity. In the same way that park, recreation, and tourism educators need to reach out across campus to establish ties that bind, we need to reach out across the globe to establish similar connections.

Finally, at a time when there is a distancing between NRPA and the professoriate in research universities, it is more important than ever to come together in pursuit of common ground, collaborate on a research agenda that informs professional practice as well as advancing leisure studies, and work together to build a better tomorrow.

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