

## Program Review

### Parks and Recreation

#### Mission/Vision

**Provide a narrative introduction to the overall School, its programs and history. Review the evidence supporting the essentiality of this program to the institution, and the importance of the program with respect to achieving the LSSU Mission and/or strategic plan/goals.**

As with all things that endure, the Parks and Recreation Degree at Lake Superior State University (LSSU) has a dynamic history. It was originated in 1980-81 by Dr. Russell Bruce, the Chair of the Department at the time (comparable to a current Dean relative to administrative responsibilities). When this was initiated it was an area of specialization in what was then known as the Recreation Management degree. Approximately 4 years later, in 1984-85, the first students were graduated with this specialization. At this time, there was approximately 10% of one faculty position within the Recreation Studies Dept that was specifically affiliated with this Parks and Recreation emphasis. This emphasis became identified officially by the Registrar's office as a Concentration within the Recreation Management degree. The Concentration was a combination of the courses offered through the Recreation Studies Department and the completion of the Natural Resources Technology Associate degree.

By 2002, the number of students enrolled in the Parks and Recreation Concentration was substantial enough so the LSSU petitioned the Michigan Universities Presidents Council to recognize and permit the Parks and Recreation Concentration to become a separate degree. This recognition was granted, and in 2003, LSSU added Parks and Recreation as a separate and distinct academic major.

A baccalaureate degree in Parks and Recreation can be a terminal degree. People with this degree can advance in their careers to accept Supervisory and Managerial positions within state, regional and federal agencies and municipalities.

This degree supports the Mission of the University by providing students with the opportunity to pursue rewarding careers, productive and satisfying lives, maximize their potential, and serve local, state and national communities. It supports the vision of the University particularly the 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet of the Vision Statement which states;

An institution which capitalizes on its locations to instill undergraduates with an understanding of environmental issues and an overarching desire to be responsible stewards of the environment

**Comment [dmm1]:** The School is commended on their timely submission of the program review documentation. Thank you.

**Comment [DJF2]:** Good summary of the evolution of the program and for the context of the current degree.

**Comment [MEW3]:** We should expect to see this again in the program outcomes.

## Productivity

**An analysis and presentation of relevant metrics including but not limited to credit hours taught (majors, general education, other service courses), degrees granted, student retention, time to degree, number of majors, minors, enrollments (and various metrics per faculty FTE):student faculty ratio; faculty advising within and outside of the program; ration of credit hours offered to majors versus non-majors. Other indices may include operational expenditures capered to comparable institutions; unit efficiency; investment in facilities and equipment; potential economies of scale, proportion of administrative costs; self-sustaining and revenue generating activity.**

The Parks and Recreation program demonstrates productivity several ways. It is a fiscally low cost program to offer. This degree utilizes the Natural Resources Technology (NRT) Associate degree as a substantial component of the required curricula. These courses are taught by faculty who also serve the Fisheries and Wildlife degree as well as Biological Sciences and the Education degree. Many of these are cross Discipline courses. The following is a short list of several courses that serve multiple degrees....this is not intended to be a comprehensive listing of courses;

- BIOL 230 Soils
- BIOL 284 Watersheds
- BIOL 286 Forestry
- NSCI 103 Environmental Science
- NSCI 104 Environmental Science Laboratory

This cross discipline approach results in the cost affiliated with offering these respective courses being distributed across multiple disciplines, and the faculty providing those courses serve multiple disciplines.

The faculty most closely associated with the Parks and Recreation degree also teaches courses which are required by several 2 and 4 year degrees other than the Parks and Rec degree;

- RECS 101, required by NRT degree
  - required by Sports and Rec degree
  - required by Parks and Rec degree
- RECS 362, required by Applied Geographic Information Science degree
  - Required by Parks and Rec degree
- RECS 280, required by Coaching minor
- RECS 450, required by Sports and Rec degree
- RECS 397 required by Sports and Rec degree
  - required by Parks and Rec degree
- RECS 435 required by Sports and Rec degree
  - required by Parks and Rec degree

**Comment [DJF4]:** Evidence that supports this?

**Comment [b5]:** I agree with Donna...since there is multiple references to the cost of the program here, a table detailing costs might add to the strength of the statements.

**Comment [DJF6]:** Again evidence of this in the form of a curriculum map, or cross curricula map would be helpful as evidence to support this.

RECS 437 required by Sports and Rec degree  
required by Parks and Rec degree

Other courses that this faculty teaches which are heavily enrolled by the general student population are the activity courses;

- RECA 109 Rock Climbing and Rappelling
- RECA 107 Backpacking
- RECA 106 Canoeing
- RECA 120 Downhill skiing/snowboarding
- RECA 119 X-Country Skiing

The faculty credit load over an academic year which reflects courses that meet regularly during that particular semester is as follows;

- 32% of the credit load is affiliated with courses specifically designed to serve Parks and Recreation Students
- 50% of the credit load is affiliated with courses which serve multiple disciplines
- 17% of the credit load is affiliated with courses which serve the general student body

The faculty advising load reflects the number of students enrolled in the degree, this is approximately 30 students annually.

This faculty also serves as the University Ombudsman. The potential total number of students served in this capacity is equivalent to the total number of students enrolled at the university. The faculty does not receive payment, nor release time for serving in this capacity. Therefore, it is not a financial burden to the university to provide this service.

University data recorded since 2006 indicates that the average enrollment for the Parks and Recreation degree is 30 students annually. At a low estimate of \$20,000.00/per year/student for tuition and other university fees, this is a revenue stream of \$600,000 annually.

The infrastructure necessary to provide this major is consistent with the infrastructure necessary to serve multiple degrees. The laboratory and field based experiences rely on the university's location; that of being proximal to national and state forests, national and state parks, national recreation areas, national wilderness areas, national wildlife refuges, and the largest confluence of freshwater lakes in the world.

Therefore, it is not a financial burden to the university to offer this degree.

**Comment [DJF7]:** Perhaps linking to the spreadsheet that generates with would be possible?

**Comment [DJF8]:** This is a significant service to the university, however, it is not institutionally driven, but rather a reflection on the skills of the incumbent. Relevance here?

**Comment [RH9]:** Well developed section demonstrating positive collaboration and the unique nature of the LSSU program.

**Demand**

Provide narrative to analyze and summarize student interest, recruitment and placement in the context of both internal and external demand.

**External demand**

Present anticipated future demand for this program as measured by market demand for graduates, economic/social/social; partnerships with external stakeholders, the uniqueness of the program. Review evidence of recent program professional society relevant to your program. Review evidence of recent program graduate employment and recent graduate program acceptance/persistence/completion data.

The Parks and Recreation major, as a separate and distinct degree, has existed at LSSU since 2003. At the time of the preparation of this current report, this degree program has been in existence for 11 years. There is an annual graduation rate of approximately 4-6 students, that would convert to approximately 55 graduates over the past 11 years. These students have been finding successful placement throughout the state of Michigan, and throughout the country as well.

Currently, there are 31 former LSSU Parks and Recreation students who are employed in a full time, supervisory capacity with Michigan Department of Natural Resources;

- 25 are employed as full time Rangers, Lead Workers, Supervisor 1 , Supervisor 2 or Manager 1 positions within the State Parks and Recreation Division
- 3 are employed in Technician or Supervisor 1 positions within the Fisheries Division
- 1 is employed as a Technician within the Wildlife Division
- 2 are employed within the Marketing and Outreach Division, 1 as an Interpretive Manager, 1 in promotions

In addition to these people who hold full time positions within the Michigan DNR, there is a minimum of 10 people who hold seasonal positions with Michigan State Parks.

Other Parks and Recreation Graduates have accepted positions within the Metro Park system in southern Michigan, and several have accepted positions with city and county park systems.

LSSU Parks and Recreation grads have accepted seasonal or full time positions at a wide variety of National Parks;

- |                |                           |              |
|----------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Olympic NP     | Glacier                   | Canyon Lands |
| Indiana Dunes  | Carlsbad Caverns          | Acadia       |
| Smoky Mountain | Wind Cave                 |              |
| Shenandoah     | Yosemite                  |              |
| Yellowstone    | Calumet Nat Historic Area |              |

Comment [DJF10]: So 31 of 55 employed in the field?

Comment [dmm11]:

Select Program(s):

- NURS-BS - Nursing-BS
- NURSPST-BS - Nursing-Post Licensure-BS
- PARK-BS - Parks and Recreation-BS**
- PHYSICIS-5-BS - Physical Sci Sec Teach-5yr-BS
- PHYSICIS-BS - Physical Science Sec Teach-BS
- POLI-BA - Political Science-BA
- POLI-BS - Political Science-BS

Quick View on Screen Before Creating Rep

Quick view program information below:

PROGRAM	PROG_SEM	TERM_DESC	STU_COUNT
PARK-BS	201110	Fall 2010	33
PARK-BS	201310	Fall 2012	30
PARK-BS	201510	Fall 2014	23
PARK-BS	201010	Fall 2009	27
PARK-BS	201210	Fall 2011	40
PARK-BS	201410	Fall 2013	32

30 or more students on average and yet 5 graduates per year on average – where are the other student going?

Not specific to this program, but I think we should be looking very closely at our “institutional leak points”, that is how/where are we losing students, and work to plug the leaks ASAP

LSSU Parks and Recreation grads have accepted full time positions working for the United States Forest Service serving forest districts in 4 different states;

Louisiana Michigan  
Illinois N Carolina

In addition to the National Parks Service and the United States Forest Service, other federal agencies affiliated with resource management that our graduates have found employment with include the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and the United States Fisheries and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

LSSU Parks and Recreation grads are currently working in full time state/local/regional recreation/resource management positions in 9 different states other than Michigan;

Utah Colorado Idaho Minnesota N Carolina  
Vermont Alaska Wisconsin New Jersey

The fact that LSSU Parks and recreation grads are finding full time employment throughout Michigan and the United States is a strong indication that there is a demand for people with these qualifications and that our students are filling these demands.

**Internal Demand**

**Provide evidence of student demand and the degree to which other units rely on this program for instructional or support. Include coursed required by majors in other units, service courses and general education offerings. Provide any additional information relevant to internal demand, differentiate between options.**

This degree is often referred to as a Discovery Major. The specific number of students who arrive on campus as FTIC freshman, pursuing Parks and Recreation is relatively low; an average of 2-3 annually over the past 10 years. However, each semester an average of 2-3 students make an internal transfer into this major, frequently from the Fisheries and Wildlife degree program. The existence of this Parks and Recreation degree enables LSSU retain these students. These students change their major and remain at LSSU to complete their undergraduate degree. Retaining 4-6 students on an annual basis enables LSSU to retain \$40,000 to \$60,000 in tuition dollars.

Not infrequently, students arrive on campus with the plan that they will complete an Associate degree in NRT. During those 2 years, these students are encouraged to remain on campus and complete a 4 year degree in Parks and Recreation. There are approximately 2 students per year who convert to the 4 year degree. At an estimate of \$20,000 per year, this converts to each students contributing and additional \$40,000 dollars as a result of their decision to remain for an additional 2 years.

**Comment [dmm12]:** This suggests that the School has a database or record of some sort which is maintained with graduate employment records. This is a great resource, and one which might be a model for other schools.

It is reasonable to have this kind of evidence directly linked to a program outcome – perhaps that “graduates of the Parks and Recreation program are directly employable upon graduation with the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful in their profession” – then you could have several ways to measure this, e.g. employment data, graduate surveys, employer surveys, internship evaluations from their senior year, etc

**Comment [DJF13]:** It seems that you have very strong connections with grads to be able to gather this data. Insights and supports for other programs to develop similar systems would be useful. Good job!

**Comment [dmm14]:**

**Select Program:**

- PARK-BS - Parks and Recreation-BS
- PHYSICS-5-BS - Physical Sci Sec Teach-5yr-BS
- PHYSICS-BS - Physical Science Sec Teach-BS
- POLI-BA - Political Science-BA
- POLI-BS - Political Science-BS
- POLIL-BA - Political Science-Pre Law-BS
- POLIL-BS - Political Science-Pre Law-BA
- POLIS-BA - Political Science Sec Teach-BA
- POLIS-BS - Political Science Sec Teach-BS
- PSYC-BA - Psychology-BA

Quick View on Screen Before Cr

**Historical Graduation Counts:**

GRAD...	PROG...	P...	ACADEMIC...
5	PARK-BS	P...	2014-2015
4	PARK-BS	P...	2013-2014
9	PARK-BS	P...	2012-2013
4	PARK-BS	P...	2011-2012
4	PARK-BS	P...	2010-2011
6	PARK-BS	P...	2009-2010
3	PARK-BS	P...	2008-2009
6	PARK-BS	P...	2007-2008
3	PARK-BS	P...	2006-2007
7	PARK-BS	P...	2005-2006
5	PARK-BS	P...	2004-2005

## Quality

Analyze and discuss the quality factors of this academic program. Review this program's incorporation of high-impact educational practice promoting student learning and engagement. Provide evidence, including but not limited to, the programs ability to attract and retain high quality students and faculty, the reputation of the program, regional/national recognition; faculty recognition; comparisons with peers; student experiences; faculty achievements in teaching, success in establishing and meeting learning goals. Review the use of effective pedagogy, and of curriculum alignment, as well as effect use of LSSU physical environment for out-of class learning experiences. Additional evidence of quality may include national program accreditation, specialized facilities or equipment.

The Parks and Recreation degree at LSSU attracts and retains many high quality students. This can be demonstrated in part through reviewing the past recipients of the Natural Resources Technology Graduate of the Year award. This award is presented to the NRT student with the highest GPA. The past 6 recipients have been Parks and Recreation majors.

A further indication of attracting and retaining high quality students can be demonstrated through the fact that a current Hart's Scholar is soon to be graduated Parks and Recreation student. This student will also be receiving this year's (2014) Natural Resources Technology Graduate of the Year award.

The current primary faculty affiliated with the Parks and Recreation degree has received both internal and external recognition for their effectiveness as an educator. Internally, they have received the Distinguished Teacher Award, and the SAILS Golden Anchor Award. Externally, they have received the Michigan Board of Governors Award.

The degree itself has been informally rated within the state as a providing a top level academic program and producing graduates with a strong knowledge base and skill set. The only school that received a higher rating was Michigan State University (MSU). MSU is one of the largest, if not the largest, of the state universities. It is also the Land Grant school of this state.

The informal rating was obtained by asking various Michigan State park supervisors and Managers who were not LSSU grads, to compare and rate LSSU Parks and Rec students to students pursuing comparable degrees from other institutions.

Another indication that this program is consistently and successfully producing high quality students is the response that Internship Site Supervisors provide to this School at the end of a student's internship. These supervisors are asked to rate the student in 8 different categories. These categories include; evidence of academic preparation, written and verbal communication skills, the students ability to take initiative, and work independently. The supervisor is asked to

**Comment [dmm15]:** This is a great data point regarding external validation, and one that would be very appropriate to use as a finding for a new program outcome.

The School faculty are encouraged to review the program outcomes as stated currently and to evaluate if they truly reflect the student-related goals for the program. It may be that many of the items listed are really measures/evidence of graduate preparation, and not the outcome itself.

For example, is "graduates will have developed an extensive recreation plan for a community and/or facility" an end-in-itself, is this the goal for the program, or is this one way we would evidence that "graduates of the Parks and Recreation program are directly employable upon graduation with the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful in their profession" (just as an example)

If the latter then create a new program outcome and move many of the current "outcomes" down one level to become the measures. THEN reevaluate what you really care about – like this survey which you thought was important and which reflects well on the program – create a measure where THIS rating is the evidence.

**Comment [p16]:** I would think that the senior projects could also be included in this section to demonstrate quality.

respond using a 10 point, Likert-type scale; 1 being the highest rating, 10 being the lowest possible rating. Over the past 10 years, since 2004, there have been 30 of these surveys returned to this school. These 30 students received an average score of 2.1 in all categories. This is a strong endorsement for the quality of this degree, as demonstrated by these students during a transition period, from student to entry level professional.

**Comment [DJF17]:** Further details of this survey, perhaps in a chart format, would be interesting and help support the claim regarding quality.

The course work required of the Parks and Recreation students is appropriate to the requirements of the state Division of Parks and Recreation. LSSU Parks and Recreation Students applying for these positions will be able to “check off” many categories that appear on the application form relative to course work completed and college/university degree being pursued.

The Parks and Recreation degree program consistently incorporates the university physical environment for out-of -classroom learning experiences;

**Comment [MEW18]:** Nice use of the region to facilitate experiential learning.

- RECS 101 students completing this course in the fall use the disc golf course
- RECS 101 students completing this course in the spring use the ice arena disc golf course
- RECS 262 students are involved in basic landscaping of Laker Woods for an outdoor recreation resource
- RECS 262 student utilize Vermillion as a field experience site
- RECS 360 students travel to land management agencies proximal to campus for interpretation/facilitation demonstrations by agency affiliated professionals
  - Michigan Historic Parks
  - Seney Wildlife Refuge
  - Tahquamenon State Park
  - Hiawatha East National Forest
  - Wolverine Sports Camps and Outdoor Center
- RECS 362 students develop land management projects for proximal federal and state agencies, as well as university affiliated locations;
  - Laker Woods
  - Vermillion
  - Hiltunen property on Sugar Island
- RECS 397 Students enrolled in these 3 courses, which comprise the senior research
- RECS 435 sequence, have utilized university properties; Laker Woods, the Hiltunen
- RECS 437 property on Sugar Island as settings for their research projects

## Assessment

**Provide a narrative to summarize the program’s effectiveness in the use of assessment data to strengthen the program and improve student learning consistent with the Criterion for Accreditation. Review the nature, quality, and level of program outcomes. Evaluate the strength of the program outcome measures and the course-program mapping. Review the progress in course assessment; course outcomes, measures and findings. Summarize assessment feedback for all stakeholders.**

As of this date (April, 2014) all of the courses taught by primary Parks and Recreation faculty in this school have been entered into TRAC Dat, a statistical package designed to track data specific to teaching goals, learning outcomes and effectiveness. Outcomes have been entered as well for the 2013 fall semester. A success rate of 70% achievement was established as minimum standard for achievement of all identified learning outcomes. Approximately 90% of the students completing these courses achieved the minimum standard of 70% on the affiliated learning outcomes.

Students do fail to achieve 70% or higher as an academic outcome. There could be several reasons for this; poor instruction

- Lack of student initiative
- Low admission standards

The data that was recently entered for the 2013 fall semester will become baseline TRAC Dat data. As more data accumulates, the findings will be compared and these findings will influence the method of presentation and the method of measurement. It is anticipated that this will enhance the efficacy of the learning/teaching process and product.

The most important stakeholders, the students and the graduates, are satisfied with the educational product that they receive. This statement is supported by research that was completed in 2006. This was a senior research project devoted to determining the level of satisfaction that Parks and Recreation graduates had towards their educational experiences. The level of satisfaction was average to above average among the graduates who returned the survey. Current students and graduates continue to express satisfaction relative to the educational experience provided through this degree. This is an informal assessment based upon anecdotal information obtained through conversations with current students and alumni.

Another primary stakeholder would be prospective employers. Their support could be interpreted through their willingness to hire LSSU Parks and Recreation graduates. Placement data, as indicated in the “Demand” section, indicates a strong positive desire to hire LSSU Parks and Recreation graduates within the state of Michigan, and there is also a solid history of placement in other states and in federal land management agencies.

**Comment [dmm19]:** More discussion is needed regarding program-level student learning outcomes. The expectation was for this narrative to address the program outcomes and measures of student achievement. There are 8 program outcomes entered into tracdat and all have some measure indicated, this is an excellent foundation to build from but none of the outcomes have findings recorded. The program has been graduating students for 30 years, there must be a rich history of program assessment, innovations, and successes. Moving these into Tracdat is a priority. If there are not systems in place to develop the needed data then that should be an even higher priority.

The School faculty together should review the outcomes and measures as suggested above. In particular look at many measures where the student is going to “complete a course” with a grade of C. Does this give the faculty useful information about student learning that can be used to ensure a high-quality program? If so, good. But isn't the degree more than the completion of some required classes, don't we expect that students can synthesize information from multiple classes and apply it in new situations, draw new conclusions, make new applications? The school is encouraged to reflect on the assignments, experiences and activities which they value, and to write program outcomes which reflect those values – the data will follow naturally since you already have students doing these things.

**Comment [dmm20]:** The school has made progress in documenting student achievement at the course level and many courses do have findings recorded, for example from RECS362 Land Mgmt “100% of the students earned 70% or higher on the 4 mid term exam questions specific to federal agencies with land management jurisdiction”

This is an exemplar finding in that it reflects a clear statement of student expectations, and clearly defines just the portion of the mid-term which deals specifically with the stated outcome. Findings which cite the whole final exam grade as evidence of a specific outcome are not desirable.

The School is encouraged to define actions based on your findings – if student achievement is satisfactory and meets your expectations then the action could be to ‘repeat the assessment again one more time’ or to ‘repeat the assessment again in three years’. If you are concerned that the other 30% of students need to know this content then the action might define how you intend to address this and then to report on the progress next year.

Finally, the school is strongly encouraged to document some assessment activity from every course in the program.

**Comment [DJF21]:** Exploration of the program outcomes would be helpful in this section – what are the skills, knowledge, and dispositions of a graduate; what is the overall program assessed on in terms of what the grads know and can do?



### Opportunity Analysis

Summarize the program's long-term goals (5-10 years). Define and report on opportunities for advancing the program. Define, qualitatively, the obstacles to moving the program towards long term goals. Report on the current status of equipment/lab and other resources. Has the program kept facilities current? How will future equipment needs be met (external funding or LSSU funding)? Describe any options for continuation of the program in another format (as an emphasis, minor, associate degree, etc.). Are there any duplicate efforts on campus relative to this program? Where can efficiency be increased through collaboration? Describe the current staffing changes required or resulting from these changes. Is the program currently at or below capacity, what steps can be taken to increase program effectiveness?

The long term goals of this program are;

- To continue to graduate well qualified students who will be able to find career opportunities that are attractive to them throughout the state and the nation
- To become the leading state institution of higher education represented in the Michigan Division of Parks and Recreation
- To continue to establish partnerships with the major federal land management agencies

There are many opportunities for expanding this program. An online report published by Michigan DNR labeled DNR Scoreboard and Performance Summary identifies upward trends in areas that will directly impact the necessity to employ well qualified Parks and Recreation professions;

- Increased over night leisure travel for nature based activities
- Increased leisure travel for outdoor sports activities
- Increased number of non resident state park visits
- Increased % of registered vehicle owners purchasing recreation passports
- Increased new hunter and new angler recruitment
- Increased ORV trail miles
- Increased state park visits per capita
- Increase number of youth indicating that they will return to Michigan State parks in the future and increased number of summer youth initiative participants
- Increase number of Passport Perks providers

The lab settings for this program are primarily the outdoor environment. The current environment is able to sustain this program and will also sustain reasonable growth in enrollment. This is a very interdisciplinary degree, therefore, the current staffing is adequate.

Potential growth for this program could be enhanced through expanded relationships with; regional, state, and the university charter, schools. This effort is being addressed in part through the Pathfinder Program which currently serves elementary schools throughout the state.

Comment [DJF22]: Is there baseline data for these goals?

Comment [dmm23]: These are good high-level goals, feel free to incorporate them with other student-level goals and use Tracdat to document your achievement of these.

Comment [p24]: Is there an enrollment goal?

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The following offices were contacted for support documentation and either no assistance, or no documentation was provided.

This writer has reflected on this and will strive to emulate these behaviors in the future.

Provost Office; Bjorne, K.

Registrar's Office

**Comment [dmm25]:** The school, and faculty member responsible for this program review, can be commended for their efforts to deliver a high quality program to your students.

The key to reducing the burden of course and program assessment is to streamline the measures to capture data from activities which you are already doing and which are valuable to you the faculty. Now the recording of that evidence in Tracdat may not be as valuable to you, but it is necessary and even that can be simplified and streamlined.

Consider the suggestions made regarding course and program review and perhaps there will be ways that Tracdat will assist in archiving the evidence sets that you already collect.