

PARKS AND RECREATION MANAGEMENT

STUDENT HANDBOOK

THINGS EVERY PRM MAJOR REALLY NEEDS TO KNOW

Parks and Recreation Management Program, Human Services Department, College of Education and Allied Professions.

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This book is to help students through the process of gaining a PRM Major. It should be read in conjunction with the *University Catalog*, which comprehensively covers all the rules and regulations. *All students should read both of these books* as different information is covered in each of them. You are ultimately responsible for your own program.

General Information

The B.S. in Parks and Recreation Management (PRM) consists of the Liberal Studies requirements, a generalist core, a focus area and electives. The generalist core gives you the broad knowledge that professionals would need wherever they choose to work in the profession whether it is employee recreation, county recreation, military recreation, resorts, tourist attractions, or the land agencies (Parks, Forest Service, Army Corps, etc.). You choose a focus area that fits the field of specialization that most interests you. The focus areas are, Community Recreation Programs -- city, county, YMCA, military, etc., Outdoor Leadership and Instruction, Commercial and Resort Recreation, and Recreation Resource Management (for the Parks, Forest Service, Army Corps etc.). We do focus on program planning and administration. Many graduates will begin their professional careers as program planners and will have management and administration skills “under their belts” so they can move up the ladder of promotion. The mission of the Parks and Recreation Management Program is as follows.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Parks and Recreation Management Program is to promote resourcefulness, independent thinking, the ability to cope with change, and service to society -- by preparing leaders in the recreation resource and outdoor education professions. The program strives to maintain an intellectual and caring environment through cooperation and collaboration in active learning. Experiential education is also an important component to encourage application and modification of theories learned.

As you can see we believe in experiential learning -- where you apply the concepts that you learn, and we believe in Cooperative Learning where you learn to work in groups. There are some underlying ideas that we would like you to consider very carefully as they will help you get the most out of the PRM program and enable you to get a good job once you graduate. These ideas are about *commitment, studying, involvement, time management, maturity and writing skills*. We feel that we should be pretty blunt about these so here goes....

Declaring the major

Write your required essay (to declare the major) early (in PRM 250 if you are taking this class), then set up an appointment with your advisor and complete your strategic plan that details how to tie in extra curricular activities, certificates, special projects and service to your program as a whole. This will give you an excellent resume by the time you are ready to graduate.

Commitment

Turn up for meetings, *be on time* and *get yourselves a good reputation* amongst your fellow students and faculty. This will be reflected in any reference that you get from the faculty. Often prospective employers do call us. We have to be honest in our response, so make it easy for us to give out glowing praise. Also, turn up to classes -- there is a strong correlation between good grades and class attendance.

Studying

Put in the time to complete projects and to study. Be serious about this. For the PRM program a 2.5 GPA is a requirement. This will require that you put in the time to study and complete projects satisfactorily. Don't aim for just scraping through with an A. Aim for an A+ (there's no such thing but if you aim as high as you can, then you are more likely to get an A). There are comprehensive examinations in the Senior Seminar so you **need to save** all your

notes and worksheets. We also suggest that you selectively buy some of your textbooks. If you lose your notes etc., then how can you study for your comprehensive finals or prepare for your Interview Portfolio?

Involvement

All employers ask about this. They are looking for ‘go-getters’ who will be highly involved and show resourcefulness. They can tell how much you got involved by reading your resume (and from your references). *Get involved.*

Time Management

Start projects early. Library research often requires inter-library loan material. Don’t expect that you can get these on short notice. Early starts also enable good peer reviewing. If you catch each other’s mistakes through good peer editing then everyone’s grades will go up. Do the readings for each class before that class period to enable you to ask intelligent questions on the readings. This will also help you to retain information more easily. Trying to cram for several courses the last week of the semester is an extremely poor practice as the amount of information will simply be too much for you to cope with.

Writing

Peer-edit each other’s work and do it brutally and honestly. It is better for you to catch each other with English/spelling/typo’s on your written communication than the instructor. Unless you are really the expert with your English, then visit the Writing & Learning Commons for assistance. For a lot of your projects -you will have to make edits after your final grade so that the documents are suitable for your portfolio. You do not want to present poor examples of your work in an interview. We check that you do make these changes in the Senior Seminar so you may as well do the best editing you can *before* you hand in work for your initial grades. This makes less work later and increases your grades at the same time. We know when you visit the Writing and Learning Commons as we receive a note from them. This will gain you points as we regard this as a good thing to do. The ability to write will only improve with continual feedback. If your writing is poor, then you could receive ‘CC’ grades. If you receive two ‘CC’s’ then you have to take English 300. The standard of your writing can affect whether you get a job and if you do get a job -- how long you stay. Embarrassingly written reports will not get you up the promotion ladder, nor will they secure your position in an organization. Please use correct English, rather than Instant Messenger style shorthand for any kind of correspondence with professors

Public Speaking

Besides ‘CC’ grades in written communication, it is also possible to get ‘OCC’ grades in oral communication. Receiving two such grades prior to the semester in which you complete 110 hours means that you have to complete CMHC 300.

Maturity

You will be representing the PRM Program in courses taught by other departments and other programs. Your actions will reflect on the PRM Program. Show your professors some respect by taking off your caps and acting like professionals. See yourself through their eyes. Appearance, dress and mannerisms can make a huge impression. You may be asking some of those professors for a reference and can only expect them to be truthful when they describe your professionalism to potential employers.

Myths and Realities

1. Myth: This degree is “easy”. Reality: In actual fact the PRM courses are tough and with high expectations.

2. Myth: This (recreation) job involves teaching people. Reality: Some front line recreation jobs do like the front line leader/coach or outdoor instructors but often you will be more likely the program administrator/manager who sub-contracts the teacher/coach positions, which are often volunteers. You will be meeting the public more often in relation to what they want in regard to your planning.

More Realities

You could be working a lot while others are playing. There is a lot of seasonal work and some graduates work full time by combining two seasonal jobs such as Park Ranger and Ski Resort employee (for a time this can be exciting!). There are many full time jobs but you must be prepared to move to locations where they are. The better paid jobs such as Military Recreation (you work as a civilian) often require a higher G.P.A.

The Essay

To become a PRM Major we require that you write an essay on why you wish to become a major. To prepare for the essay, look at the resources in the Green Room (Reid 122) to get an idea of what the profession includes. There are many possibilities and directions to take in this field so we would like you to research these and then formulate some goals in your essay to start you off on the right foot. We will use this essay to help us in determining who should advise you and also to assist in putting together a strategic plan for you. We can also tell how much you need to work on your writing and appropriate strategies for this can be added to your plan. You will be given time in PRM 250 to prepare and write your essay if you wish to do it then.

Strategic Plan

You will develop a strategic plan with us so that you can show involvement on your resume when you leave. Involvement is what prospective employers are looking for. Many of you will have only two years to do that (if you come to us after the completion of Liberal Studies requirements or as a transfer student) so we have to ‘hit the ground running’. We will use another check sheet for this and assess how you are doing each advising session. Read the “What you can do with this degree sheet” to get some ideas – see appendix A.

The Portfolio

All your projects, certificates, awards, documents from classes etc., will be used to build an interview portfolio. This will help you get a job and to help you do your job. Get a copy of the check sheet for what is expected. The Portfolio is a classy folder (from Walmart or some such place -- around \$15) with most of what you produce while completing the PRM degree. It includes things like a Program/Grant Proposal, Program Evaluation, Research Prospectus, Business Plan, Risk Management Plan, certificates, and references from your mini internships. You would include whatever you think will help you but we have a “must include” list, so use the check sheet. This means of course that you *MUST save all your work* -- hard copies and disks. After a course is complete you will be given your work back with suggested changes to be made. In the Senior Seminar you will hand in the previous work with suggested corrections as well as the corrected work so we can check that improvements have been made. If documents are “lost”, then you must write another from scratch. However you do not want to be writing

new documents in your senior seminar, so make copies as you go. Having one person in a group have the only copy is not a good idea; in fact it is a terrible idea. If you are working in a group to complete projects, then each team member must save everything.

The portfolio is extremely important. It is part of your ticket to getting your capstone internship and your first job as it is an *internship portfolio*. Think about that! You will be submitting examples of your work at an interview -- so the more you work on it at the “front end”, then the fewer corrections will be needed for the Senior Seminar version. You need to impress not depress a future employer. The quality of work then is very important. As the chances of getting a job hinge on this, your motivation to put the time in completing excellent work should be pretty high. Showing a prospective employer mediocre work would not make you very competitive in the job market!

All the documents in the portfolio are blueprints or models for you to use in the future. You will actually have something to help you when you are asked to produce such documents as part of your first or subsequent jobs.

This education has cost you and/or your family a lot of money and it has cost the state even more as your education is highly subsidized -- so look after your work. In the not-too-distant future when you go for an interview, the expectation will be that you present evidence of your ability to produce the type of work expected. Examples of your work will be as important as having a B. S. degree.

****Note:** It is also important to create an electronic version of your portfolio. You can do this by scanning projects or converting them to pdf’s.

Students Outcomes

You will be graduating with a portfolio, which will contain the following documents (and others).

- Grant/Program proposal
- Evaluation report
- Trip Planning Document
- Research Prospectus
- Business Plan
- Risk Management Plan
- Leadership self-analysis (outdoor students)
- LOG/Journal (outdoor students)
- Resume/letter of application/3 references
- Computer example data - Leadership self study with graphs and charts
- Budget spreadsheet
- PERT Chart

Courses and course sequencing

Use the Degree Requirement check sheets - which are coded (F = Fall, S = Spring, SS = Summer) to organize when you want to take your courses on the Long Range Planning Sheet. Make sure that you do certain courses early. Here are some that you have to schedule in early.

PRM 254 This course is a pre-requisite for the outdoor concentration courses.

- PRM 383 The mini-internship is 50 hours in an agency of your choice (within reason). You attend the first session documented in the schedule to gain information on possibilities, then complete 50 hours at an agency. This has to be repeated three times. Start on these as early as you can. You can use one to get ‘the inside scoop’ on an agency that you might be considering for your capstone internship (big internship). It is possible to do two mini-internships in the summers. These experiences enable you to give some service to the community and to bring examples back to classes and get your three “To whom it may concern” references for your interview portfolios. *Get the references before you leave.*
- PRM 484 &485 These courses are three credit internships that can be used to get further experience, they can be done any semester including the summer. They would count as electives.
- PRM 486 This is a field experience class so that you can get credit for taking courses like Outward Bound, NOC or WFR course. You have to sign up for PRM 486 in advance of the course.
- PRM 370 This is the Orientation to Internship course and must be done before The Capstone Internship (PRM 480 and PRM 483) as it gives you the skills to apply for it and prepares you for all the requirements (which are considerable). This course is only offered once a year in the spring semester -- so when you do your long range planning, slot it in before 480/483. This might mean three semesters ahead if you intend to do your internship in a spring semester.
- PRM 495 In this class, *you will be asked to turn in your completed portfolio and take a final comprehensive examination* so do not register for this course until your final spring or fall semester. The comprehensive examinations cover information from all the core courses (not the focus areas) so **SAVE ALL YOUR NOTES, WORKSHEETS, BOOKS, COPIES FROM SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES FROM RESERVE MATERIALS** as well as your **PROJECTS FOR YOUR PORTFOLIOS** -- in a safe place.

Elective Credit

You will need approximately a third of your degree requirements in elective credits. They can be truly elective courses and may include a minor. Your advisor will suggest courses that would help you with your career aspirations, these can also be found on “guided” electives sheets available from your advisor.

Other important things to remember

To graduate with the PRM Degree, you need to have completed 120 credits (with passing grades), of which 50% of major credits have to be upper division (300 and 400 level). To

graduate from WCU you have to have a 2.0 G.P.A., however for the PRM program it is a **2.5 G.P.A.** Here's another quirk -- if you pass a course with a low grade and then repeat it to get a better grade, then you must fill out the required form for the Registrar's Office, otherwise your cumulative G.P.A. will be incorrect on your transcript. This could result in us thinking you have 120 credits when in fact you only have 117! Of course you cannot graduate with three credits short and the Registrar's office will almost certainly pick this up about a week before you are due to graduate!

After approximately 90 hours – do a comprehensive check with your advisor to make sure that you have all the courses needed to graduate on your long range planning check sheet.

Immediately after you have registered for courses the **semester before** you are due to graduate, complete the online graduate application form in MyCat (this will initiate a graduation fee, so don't be surprised to get hit with this – it is to pay for the diplomas, gifts and ceremonies). There are deadlines for graduation - so do not dilly-dally in getting this done! **Missing the deadline could mean that you graduate a semester later than you had planned. You cannot graduate if you do not apply for graduation.** The next thing to do is to view a NEW audit/evaluation, which will show all your courses in blue if they are complete or registered for. If there is anything in red, this means that there is a problem like you haven't done a required course, or a substitution form hasn't been completed, or you haven't reached 120 hours, or you haven't got an overall GPA of 2.5., etc. For anything red, high tail it to your advisor to straighten it out – the SOONER the better.

If Liberal Studies requirements are not completed correctly such as forgetting a science lab or the English Literature requirement, or doing the wrong course in a sub-section, or not completing the Upper Level Perspective (the most common error) then signatures by just about everyone and their mother are required to try for any waivers and this is just about impossible. So be very careful to complete all Liberal Studies requirements or you probably will have to come back an extra semester to take care of the omission.

Internships and Field Experiences

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 383
Mini-internships | These are to get you started and to “get your feet wet”. Choose different agencies that will give you the experiences that will help you in your career. They also enable you to learn things that you can bring back for discussion in classes or to practice things that you have learned in classes. You get to choose these (within reason) but we can also help you find one. You can do a couple in the summers if you wish. There are three to complete (each one credit). |
| 389 Co-ops | Cooperative Education is like an internship but the paper work is organized through the Career Services. Some agencies prefer Coops. They can be used for upper division elective credit and provide ways to get work experiences as do internships. Ask us for advice on this. |
| 483 Internship
480 Independent | These courses are your CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE done at the end or near the end of your course of study. You must have |

study

completed the PRM 361 Program Planning course and PRM 370 Orientation to Internship course before you can do this.

484 Internship
or 485

These are extra internships that can be done throughout the year or in the summers. They count for upper division credit.

486
Field Experience

This is where you can gain elective credit for completing NOC, OB, WFR or NOLS type courses.

Focus Area Information

All Focus Areas

For information on the type of jobs you can get with strategies for helping you --see the "What You Can Do with This Degree Check Sheet". The focus areas are Community Recreation, Outdoor Leadership and Instruction, Commercial and Resort Recreation, and Recreation Resources Management. Choose your focus area as early as you can, then you can choose research papers that you may be assigned to explore the area where you will be working in the future. There is further information on the Recreation Resource, and Outdoor Leadership and Instruction focus areas detailed below.

Recreation Resource Management Concentration

If you are interested in natural resource management then you will be doing the Recreation Resource Management Concentration -- working for the Park Services, the Forest Service or the Army Corps of Engineers as a ranger. We realize that this area needs to be tailored to fit the different land agencies; for example, law enforcement is more useful for the Parks Service than the Forest Service. You can consider doing the Law Enforcement for Park Rangers at Southwestern Community College and we will transfer the credit to the concentration in this major. This course puts you ahead of others when applying for park jobs. If you are interested in Wildlife Management, then consider doing some Wildlife Management courses at Haywood Technical College -- again we will count this credit as part of this concentration. Basically we will tailor this concentration to fit the type of agency you prefer.

Outdoor Leadership and Instruction

Experience counts for a lot in this area so you must keep a journal of all the trips, workshops, clinics, etc. that you do to add to your Interview Portfolio. Some agencies such as Outward Bound expect details of your past outdoor experiences. Outdoor equipment is available to PRM majors. Because of risk management concerns, climbing equipment is unavailable and kayaking equipment is restricted. If you wish to become an outdoor leader, then we recommend doing an expedition course through WEA, NOLS, OB, Landmark Learning or a similar agency. Credit can be given through PRM 486 Field Experience but you have to check with us first.

Cooperative Learning and Distributed Leadership

Cooperative Learning is where you work in high functioning groups. It entails the use of five elements which are integrated into classes. These elements are as follows.

1. Positive Interdependency

As a group you must believe that you will "sink or swim together." The perception must be that one cannot succeed unless everyone succeeds. Each person's efforts benefit all, creating a commitment to other people's success as well as one's own. This may require a real mindset change for baby boomers and general 'scrappers'. Remember the "other directedness"¹ concept. If there is no positive interdependence, there is no cooperation.

2. Individual and Group Accountability, and Personal Responsibility

Each member must be accountable for contributing a fair share of the work and not "hitch hike". It includes assessing who needs extra assistance, support and encouragement. The truth is that as you provide instruction to a group member who needs it you 'cement' your own knowledge. The purpose of using cooperative learning in groups is to help improve the individuals in that group. A commitment is required to ensure that everyone contributes and understands all the material connected with the project.

3. Face to Face Promotive Interaction

Cooperative Learning groups are both personal and academic support groups. Through interpersonal interactions, cognitive learning is increased. Things like oral explanations, discussions, connections to other learning, testing each other, and teaching each other all improve the learning. This fits nicely with the SQ3R method recommended for most effective studying. Remember - Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review. Often students without a group find it awkward or silly to recite material to themselves. Yet the actual recitation of the material is a significant part of learning it. Personal commitment is increased as the group promotes this kind of work together.

4. Interpersonal and Small Group Skills

To get the task accomplished most effectively, groups must function as a team. This requires that all members practice good team skills which include; effective leadership, decision-making, trust building, communication, and conflict management. Everyone must also be *motivated* to use these skills. Remember -- you will need these skills when you enter the workforce.

5. Group Processing

Group processing includes discussing how the group is working. How effective are relationships? Are the goals being met and is the task being accomplished? How well? How can the group improve? Is the group standing by the group norms set by the group? What can you do when group norms are ignored or dysfunctional behavior happens?

For the group to be a high functioning cooperative learning group, **all** of the above five elements need to be used. If the group gets the motivation to build in all these elements then a

¹'Other directed' meaning selflessness is a term used by Paul Petzoldt in his outdoor education teachings

higher functioning team will grow with more learning. You can help by being a good group member --

- Be reliable
- Show commitment
- Be supportive
- Be open minded
- Do your share of the work.

We would like you to work on “distributed leadership”, which means that anyone and everyone will take on leadership roles in the group to move the group forward in the task or relationship. This requires functional or helpful group roles such as those mentioned above. Dysfunctional roles such as being unreliable or piggybacking will make the group dynamics unpleasant and the group ineffective. This all subsequently affects your grades.

You will have to work in groups in the work place so learn the skills now. In fact, the ability to work in a team is usually placed above anything else when comparing job skills. Read The Group Book - Cooperative Skills for Effective Groups (formerly known as Groups Bloody Groups) to help you with an understanding of this, along with strategies to get things going toward being an effective group with ongoing maintenance of relationships.

Examinations

Bring a Scantron sheet, #2 Pencil and a pencil sharpener to all examinations. Study individually and study in groups. For essay questions, seriously plan potential question areas by drawing out cognitive maps, which you can memorize and integrate into carefully prepared answers with critical thought. Write using good techniques such as carefully stating your thesis, then continually referring to it with a good chain of reasoning and good boiler plating. You can only receive points for quality information given. Careful preparation for examinations then, requires many hours of serious study.

The PRM Club

The PRM Club is part of SGA at WCU (as long as it is registered each semester) and receives funding to help with club expenses. Additional funds can be accessed through SGA for special projects. Being a member of the club enables you to get to know other PRM students which, helps you to make friends on campus, broadens your network of professional contacts, for when you have graduated. This can help you in future job searches and can help you whenever you need peer advice on whatever project you may be given. The club does quite a lot of service in the region including being part of the Adopt a Trail and Campsite program for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

We encourage you to use the club to gain leadership experience. Several students have led trips to the Grove Park Inn, a city parks and recreation agency, or a tourism attraction. Some students have organized a club BBQ, a ropes course experience, a tournament or hikes in Slickrock and Shining Rock wilderness areas. Some students have done service projects for the community such as a Halloween Party with the Great Smoky Mountain Railroad for REACH kids, or have taken kids to Athletic events like basketball games or volleyball games for the Special Friends Program at Scotts Creek School. There are lots of opportunities to practice your leadership skills. Think of how you will answer the question that will most certainly be asked at

your first job interview -- “What leadership roles have you taken?” The club is extremely important as it is the best avenue for you to develop both a strong professional network and your own leadership. Other avenues to do this are through fraternities and sororities, Base Camp Cullowhee or through Last Minute Productions at the University Center. However with other organizations, you may not be developing a network of Recreation Professionals who may help you as professionals in your future careers.

Don’t forget that prospective employers are looking for graduates who have shown INVOLVEMENT through their resumes and references. Anyone can get involved in a variety of ways. To be competitive in the job market, you need to be involved -- that is the major reason for the club’s existence.

At the end of each Spring Semester the club organizes an awards banquet for PRM Majors which usually consists of a nice dinner in some restaurant. Awards are presented in the form of plaques, certificates, and Mars bars followed by slides of the year gone by.

Several years ago the PRM Program started the Regional Adventure Education Conference. We organized it for four years then started a rotation with other colleges in the region, Warren Wilson, SCC, Montreat College, and Brevard College. The club gets to run this every 5th year or so now. The conference is for students and run by students and costs very little -- another great way to get involved!

Wilderness Education Association (WEA)

The PRM Program was highly involved with WEA but now only in a minimal way. We don’t now offer expedition courses and so encourage students to do a WEA course with another university or agency. It is probably the least expensive option for expedition courses. Their website is <http://www.weainfo.org/>

The National Ski Patrol (NSP)

The PRM Program is also accredited through the National Ski Patrol. Completing the NSP’s Outdoor Emergency Care Certificate through PRM 356 will qualify you to train with the Ski Patrol at Cataloochee or Sapphire Valley Ski Resorts. This qualification is also regarded as being the equivalent of a Wilderness First Responder -- the first aid qualification currently regarded as the standard in the outdoor profession for outdoor leaders. The certification can be maintained by attending the annual updates provided by the National Ski Patrol throughout the country. Courses are also offered in professional rescuer CPR each year for students wishing to become involved with the ski patrol.

Forms to Guide You

The following forms are designed to help you through the strategic planning process and through the academic curriculum. They are available from Ben’s office in Reid Gym

- What You Can Do With This Degree Check Sheet
- Pre-major Check Sheet
- Curriculum Check Sheet
- Long Range Planning Sheet
- Writing the Essay Check Sheet
- Student Strategic Planning Check Sheet

Guided Electives Check Sheets
Portfolio Check Sheet

Study Abroad

There are possibilities to study abroad for around the same cost as studying at Western. We have a special agreement with the Galway Mayo Institute of Technology in Ireland and have had international exchanges for a few years now. Studying in Ireland would require a year commitment and is best done early. We have also developed an agreement with a university in Victoria, Australia for a semester exchange. It is a great experience to do study abroad. Ask for further details.

Final Thoughts

“Work hard and play hard”, that old adage holds especially true for PRM majors at WCU. Our location gives us some of the finest recreation areas in the country. Take advantage of this as you study hard and produce the best work that you can -- strike a good balance of recreation, play and work to make your experience here at Western both fruitful and enjoyable. We wish you well in your endeavors.

