

**PROFESSIONAL PRACTICUM MANUAL:  
EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION IN  
RECREATION AND LEISURE SERVICES**

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr. Jewell is a full professor and the chairperson of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at SUNY College at Brockport in Brockport, New York. For fifteen of his seventeen years at Brockport he has served as the Coordinator of Field Placement. He is the author of numerous articles, of the anthology *Speaking of Leisure, Etc.*, and of the text *Confronting Child Abuse Through Recreation*. He is a frequent speaker at local, state, and national conferences, workshops, and symposia.

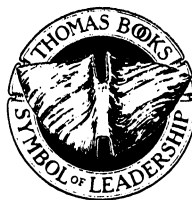
**Second Edition**

**PROFESSIONAL PRACTICUM MANUAL:  
EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION IN  
RECREATION AND LEISURE SERVICES**

A Workbook for the Recreation and  
Leisure Studies Practicum

*By*

**DAVID L. JEWELL, PH.D., C.L.P.**



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## FROM THE AUTHOR

**T**he text which follows may seem rather lengthy or exceedingly comprehensive. Yet, individual recreation and leisure curricula are free to adopt all or only part of the guidelines and procedures shared. The text is an attempt to clarify for students, faculty, and site or agency supervisors their responsibilities and expectations. Yet there is no claim to have “covered all of the bases.” What is shared are the components of a practicum/internship program that has been deemed successful by a multitude of students, site or agency supervisors, and faculty. What follows is an attempt to share the success of one program for consideration by other academic programs. The hope is that it will be in some way helpful in enhancing the cardinal element in the student’s professional development and, perhaps, entire professional career.

David L. Jewell

## **DEDICATION**

This second edition is dedicated to the cadre of exceptional professionals who contribute their time, energies, and knowledge to the academic and professional development of those in transition from students to professionals hopeful of entering the parks, recreation, and leisure services workforce. It is also dedicated to the students who have by sharing their critical assessments of their practical experiences assured more positive experiences for those who follow. Finally, this edition is dedicated to the numerous college and university faculty who have committed their lives to preparing those who will in turn dedicate their lives to providing quality leisure experiences.

## **PREFACE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

**T**his text has been compiled as a workbook for the Recreation and Leisure Studies major enrolled in the Practicum. It is intended to provide information concerning the requirements of all individuals directly involved in the experience. The Manual is intended to fulfill the following purposes:

- 1) identify the expectations, responsibilities, policies and procedures governing the practicum experience.
- 2) provide to the practicum student, the agency supervisor, and the college/university supervisor a common packet of information relative to the role and specific duties each is expected to fulfill.
- 3) facilitate better communication and understanding of the practicum experience between the student, agency, the major faculty, and the total college community.
- 4) define the practicum experience in terms of goals, objectives, and overall purpose.

The Manual is concerned with the practicum experience which extends over a period of \_\_\_\_ or more weeks and with the requirements for the Practicum. The policies, procedures, goals and objectives contained herein have been approved by the Recreation and Leisure Studies faculty and the administration of the college/university.

Although not required of agencies, the student may receive compensation (not salary) during the practicum. Salary is discouraged in order to prevent the student and the agency from losing sight of the purpose of the placement. Though the student is expected to make contributions to the placement agency, there is equal responsibility to the academic department. If being placed on salary is the only means of providing financial support to the student, then the academic department must take necessary measures to assure (1) that the academic requirements will not be compromised and (2) that there are no potential conflicts with regard to student insurance, workmen's compensation, and the school's liability insurance. Other issues may also need to be considered, depending upon the individual academic department and/or school. If compensation is provided to the student, it should be in the form of a stipend; i.e., a small sum to help defray the living expenses incurred during the practicum placement. Also, a travel allowance, housing and/or meals may be provided. The latter three are strongly encouraged.

The practicum is a minimum of \_\_\_\_\_ hours which is to be spread over a minimum of \_\_\_\_\_ weeks providing each student with \_\_\_\_\_ semester hours of credit. It is contended that this is one of the most important experiences that students have as part of their academic preparation to enter the field of recreation and leisure services in that it begins the transition from “student” to “professional.” For this reason, the student, agency supervisor, and college/university supervisor must recognize that this experience must be of the highest quality.

The “Practicum Program” is a cooperative arrangement between the Recreation and Leisure Studies student, the approved placement agency, the academic department. Through this cooperative program, it is anticipated that the student will have the opportunity to gain vital professional exposure to and experience in any or all of the following (but not limited to) areas: administration, management, program planning, supervision, the use and maintenance of program materials and facilities, and leadership. This experience will be closely supervised and controlled by qualified and experienced agency personnel as well as appropriately qualified and experienced college/university faculty.

### **General Goals**

The primary goal of the practicum experience is to provide an opportunity for the Recreation and Leisure Studies major to learn new and enhance old practical experiences and skills required to fill the role of “professional recreator.” General goals which may be attained during the practicum experience include, but are not limited to, the following:

- providing opportunities to field-test those concepts, theories, ideas, formulated within the academic environment;

- providing opportunities to continue to develop and to test individual philosophies of leisure services;

- providing the practical laboratory in which students can develop and/or learn skills in leadership, planning, programming, supervision, and administration;

- providing opportunities for students to gain insight into the field of leisure services through direct exchange of information with qualified professional recreators;

- making accessible to the student the various services, records, facilities, etc., which would help to enhance the learning experience;



providing the student the opportunity to develop and test human relations skills essential to becoming a leisure services professional;

completing a minimum of \_\_\_\_\_ hours of field study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Recreation and Leisure Studies;

providing a continuum of supervised experiences ranging from orientation and observation to planning and administration;

enhancing the existing cooperative relationship between the placement agency, Recreation and Leisure Studies and College;

providing a means of evaluating curriculum and faculty effectiveness in educating the student to work in the field of recreation and leisure services;

providing the opportunities for the student to determine strengths and weaknesses and to build on the strengths and to alleviate the weaknesses;

providing agencies with students academically prepared so that the students may function as viable assets and human resources to the agency;

strengthening correct perceptions of the leisure services field and to alleviate any myths concerning the contemporary professional of recreation and leisure services;

providing the student the opportunity to be placed in an agency selected from a diversity of approved recreation and leisure service sites, plus related types of agencies that incorporate recreation as an essential part of their services; and

providing opportunities for practitioners and educators to assess whether or not the student possesses the knowledge, technical skills, and interpersonal skills to enter the ranks of new professionals.

These general goals should be complemented by each student according to the individual goals each is striving to attain. They should further be expanded by the goals of each placement agency and its staff. Objectives related to the stated goals must be individually developed; therefore, students are expected to identify realistic and measurable objectives in order to provide direction and evaluation information for the experience. Input from agency supervisors is essential and the college supervisor will be available for consultation.

The importance of the practicum experience cannot be overemphasized. It provides higher education within a living laboratory where the curriculum can be applied and tested; it provides the agencies with the opportunity to train and educate future professionals according to contemporary and practical techniques; and it provides the student with essential experience to smooth the transition from the student role to the role of professional. It is anticipated that this partnership will provide highly qualified and competent individuals prepared to assume leadership in the dynamic field of recreation and leisure services.

### **Tracks/Specializations/Areas of Concentration/Options**

The student selecting the Recreation and Leisure Studies major may elect to pursue one of the specialization tracks which place emphasis on professional preparation. No matter which direction the student chooses, the selection of the proper placement site is paramount in determining the degree of specialization that the student will achieve prior to graduation. Two recommendations seem to be important to the new Recreation and Leisure Studies major. Prepare to have a given area of specialization and skill to be employable and attractive to the hiring agencies. Secondly, develop a broad perspective or comprehensive picture of the field of leisure services to enhance the possibilities of being hired in non-specialization areas. It would also be helpful to graduate with a minor or second major related to the field of leisure services or, more specifically, to the particular option. For instance, a major in recreation with a speciality in therapeutic recreation and a minor in psychology may be a good combination. Or, a major in recreation with a specialty in recreation management and a minor in business administration may be another good combination.

### **Agency Involvement**

Much of the success of any field placement program is directly related to the involvement and support of the professional practitioner who provides the opportunity and the resources for the experiential process. The Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies has been fortunate to have experienced an excellent supporting cast of leisure service practitioners. The excellent quality of the placement sites including personnel, programs, and facilities has done much to enhance the program. Many agencies and individuals have had much to do with the training and preparation of Recreation and Leisure Studies majors. One would be remiss in not thanking all of the staff at the many agencies who have supervised students over the years.

Faculty certainly appreciate the fine work being done by the recreation professionals at these sites on behalf of students. The faculty look forward to a continuing and rewarding relationship. Without their participation and support, the unique field experience would not be a reality. The faculty anticipate a cooperative venture that will persist in its benefits to all -- the college, the agency, the student, and the curriculum.

DIRECTOR OF FIELD PLACEMENT

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## **INTRODUCTION**

## INTRODUCTION

Recreation and Leisure educators and practitioners alike would, for the most part, agree that the practicum is the capstone and pivotal aspect of the student's academic experience and professional development. This is not a recent revelation; findings by Zito (1982) and Carter and Herron (1985) support the notion by stressing the value of the undergraduate's practicum. Furthermore, Reynolds and O'Morrow related what should be the value of the practicum to the student. They believe the practicum should:

- contribute to the student's identification with the profession as a whole
- contribute to the student's self-awareness
- facilitate the integration of knowledge, skills and attitudes learned in class; and
- develop the student's skill on the level of beginning competencies.

(1985, p. 123)

As is obvious to most who have either supervised or worked along side the practicum student, there are others who benefit from the practicum and the agency-school affiliation. A properly organized and administered practicum affiliation also benefits the school, the academic department, and the agency.

The academic institution as a whole has a great deal to gain from a successful practicum program. Three of the most obvious benefits are imagery, public support, and recruitment. Even if a college is within a thirty mile radius, few professionals and lay people relate to the institution on a regular basis unless they are students, have children who are students, or are active alumni. The outreach provided by the practicum fosters a link between the college and the community, often with individuals in key positions of professional and community-wide leadership. It provides a means for such individuals to develop an "inside" perspective of the academic institution, its programs, and its personnel or faculty. The school ceases to be merely an institution; rather, it becomes an integral part of the hosting agency's mission and its faculty become colleagues with complimentary missions -- the development of future professionals, the supplementing of agency resources, and the enlightenment of academic curricula and faculty.

The aforementioned fosters, or should foster, mutual advocacy. The author has had, regrettably, a few occasions to see this resulting mutual advocacy at work. The past several years in New York (as in a number of

states) can be described in a number of ways, but one of them is not “economically bountiful”. On a number of occasions letters of support have been solicited from faculty for retention of staff and maintenance of programs in agencies successfully hosting students. These letters were written willingly. This, of course, also benefits those the recreation agency serves. On the other hand, letters have not been forwarded supporting agencies where there was not firsthand knowledge of staff and programs.

Likewise, academic institutions and individual departments can benefit during this age of austerity and “cutbacks.” As an example, the author’s department was targeted in 1985 for a rather substantial cut. Practicum students shared this information with their hosting agencies (unsolicited by the faculty) and the outpouring of support played a major role in the retention of critical personnel lines. Letters were also forwarded to legislators expressing concern over cuts to public higher education and in support of the college.

Academic departments may also reap benefits in the area of curriculum. The pool of agency site supervisors is a potential source of adjunct faculty and membership for the curriculum advisory committee. Members of the pool have a) familiarity with the curriculum, b) demonstrated support of the curriculum, c) often demonstrated teaching ability, and d) demonstrated awareness of professional trends and issues.

Another benefit to be realized by the hosting agency or placement site is renewal. This is often referred to as “new blood”. Students can bring new ideas, and possibly solutions to old problems, to the site. They are not as bound by tradition or by preconceived notions with respect to programs, clientele, or personnel. The agency, as well as the academic programs, should be structured to encourage, or to even require, the student to demonstrate creativity and to share ideas and perceptions with the site supervisor.

Aside from the previously noted benefits to student, there is one other deserving mention. A well structured and administered practicum should provide the student ample opportunity to demonstrate suitability for employment. The practicum must, therefore, require the student to do more than lead and teach. These skills are by no means unimportant, but today’s Recreation and Leisure Service agency expects the soon-to-be graduate to also possess good communication skills and skills in critical, reflective, and analytical thinking, as well as initiative, responsibility, and creativity in programming.

Finally, most Recreation and Leisure Studies faculty will likely agree that the success of the practicum or internship experience most frequently is dependent upon the agency’s site supervisor. Therefore, it is critical that the academic department, particularly the field placement coordinator, convey to the prospective placement site the importance of having the “best person for the job” as the agency’s student supervisor or coordinator of interns. The importance of the supervisor has been addressed by a number of authors.

Brownstein (1981) stressed the important role the social work supervisor has in enabling the student to develop skills and attitudes necessary for professional maturity. Worthington and Roehlke (1979) when relating to the counseling internship point out that "a good relationship between the supervisor and supervisee was a significant predictor of supervisee satisfaction ..." (Schweer and Card, 1989, p. 88).

Fifteen years earlier, Patterson (1964) stressed that the value of the field placement is dependent upon two factors. The first is the variety of persons worked with and the duration and intensity of the work. The second factor is the supervision the student receives. He makes the point that the first factor is of questionable value if the quality of supervision is inadequate (Schweer and Card).

According to Lanning (1971) the student-supervisor relationship is also critical to the student-client relationship. "If the intern perceives his or her relationship with the supervisor to be positive, the intern-client relationship is perceived to be positive (Schweer and Card, p. 88).

The findings of Dodenhoff's research (1981) point out the importance of the quality of supervision to student effectiveness of professional practice. Dodenhoff's results suggest that interns or practicum students who are more favorably attracted to their supervisors are more effective with respect to professional practice than those who are not attracted to their supervisors (Schweer and Card).

In an attempt to identify the characteristics of a successful site or agency supervisor a study was conducted (Jewell, 1989). It was felt that the identification of the generic characteristics would be helpful in identifying, recruiting, appointing, and evaluating site supervisors across the curriculum, as opposed to only a single specialization.

Those selected initially to participate in the study, which used the Delphi Technique of data collection, were identified by three academic departments from different regions of the county as successful and popular site supervisors. Of the sixty initially asked to participate, 43% or 26 participated for the entire course of the study. The 26 represented the areas of campus recreation (2), commercial recreation (1), community recreation (7), employee services (1), outdoor recreation and environmental education (2), professional associations (1), therapeutic recreation/recreation for special populations (11), and youth agencies (1). The 26 represented 407.5 years of professional experience with a range of 5 to 34 years and an average length of professional employment of 15.7 years. As to current employment, they were employed a total of 257 years with a range of 2-28 years and an average employment of 10 years.

The extent of student supervision was, to say the least, impressive. During their combined careers, the respondents had supervised a total of 870 students with a range of 2 to 120 and an average of 34.8. Within the year immediately preceding the study, a total of 93 students were supervised with a range of 0 to 40 and a mean of 3.7 students.

The educational backgrounds were as follows:

- 2 possessed the doctorate in Recreation and Leisure Studies or in a major having special emphasis in Recreation and Leisure Services
- 7 possessed master degrees with majors in Recreation and Leisure Studies
- 9 possessed bachelor degrees with majors in Recreation and Leisure Studies and
- 8 possessed bachelor degrees in other areas.

Of the latter, the degrees were in such related areas as physical education, music, art, health, etc. Also, of those possessing bachelor degrees in Recreation and Leisure Studies 4 had obtained master degrees in other courses of study; i.e., public administration and education.

Finally, 22 of the participants were members of either state or national professional Recreation and Leisure Services organizations. Also, 16 of the participants were certified or registered by a professional organization or certifying body; i.e., NCTRC, NRPA, NESRA, NISRA or state associations.

The respondents were asked to respond to three questionnaires and to identify and prioritize through the course of the study supervisor characteristics in the following eight areas:

- Academic degree and experience
- Credentials: registration, certification, licensure
- Professional affiliations
- Academic preparation: specific courses and/or subject matter
- Programmatic skills and experiences
- Supervisory/managerial skills and experiences
- Personal characteristics and skills
- Site supervisor goals.

These specific areas of concern were identified through the review of numerous adjunct faculty and agency application forms and fieldwork manuals used by various Recreation and Leisure Studies curricula. "Though stated differently, most of the applications made inquiries into these eight areas. The fieldwork manuals did specify goals for field placement, yet there was not a consensus on what site supervisor characteristics would 'qualify' the site supervisor for voluntary adjunct status" (Jewell, p.68) or selection as a site supervisor.

The results of the study disclose what academic departments and agencies may want to be the criteria for site supervisor approval and selection. The results demonstrate that the successful supervisor may well not be the employee most skilled in program methods or the one with the highest level of