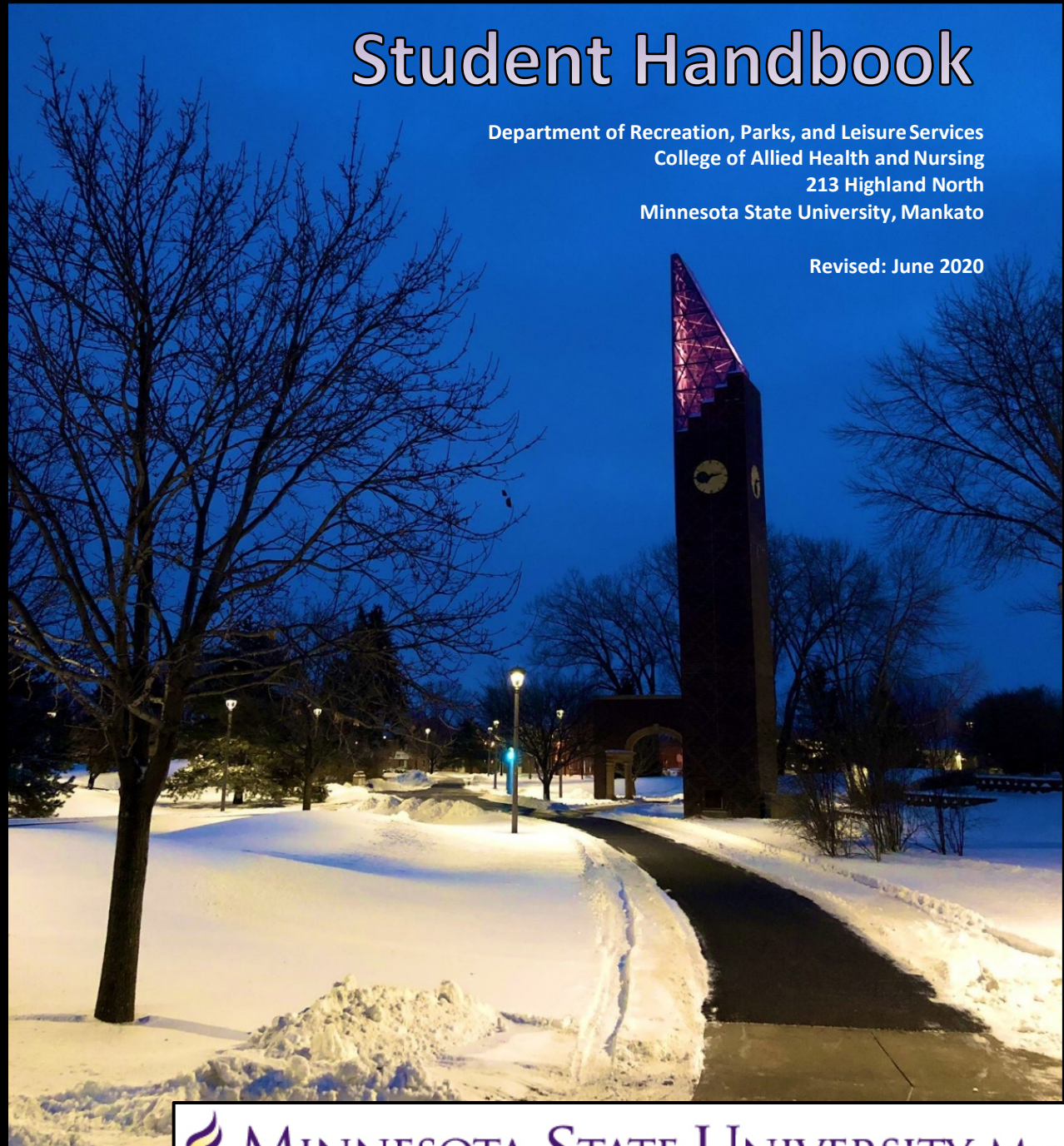


# RPLS Recreation, Parks & Leisure Services

## Student Handbook

Department of Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Services  
College of Allied Health and Nursing  
213 Highland North  
Minnesota State University, Mankato

Revised: June 2020



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# WELCOME TO THE RPLS PROGRAM

## The RPLS Family

Welcome and congratulations on being a part of the Minnesota State University, Mankato Department of Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Services! You are officially a member of an exclusive club. Members of the RPLS Family are scattered across the country, in leadership positions spanning the spectrum of the recreation world.

## Connecting RPLS Emphases

In RPLS, there are three areas of emphasis: Leisure Planning and Management (LPM), Therapeutic Recreation (TR), and Resource Management (RM). Many people believe these are separate fields. Those who do so fail to understand the inherent connections that exist between the three. To be an effective professional, one must understand the importance of all three emphases. The RPLS Department recognizes those connections better than any program in the country and our diverse faculty reflects that understanding.

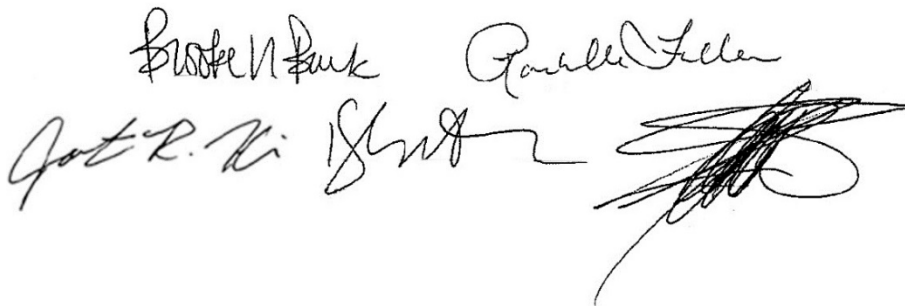
## RPLS Pride

We often meet people who were unaware that RPLS is a career. What others do not realize is that statistically speaking, RPLS graduates are among the most highly employable, adaptable, and personally fulfilled students on the job market. The RPLS industry is the largest single industry in the world. It is significant for its ability to encourage economic development and for physical, psychological, and community well-being. Moreover, it spans the public, not-for-profit, and private sectors and breadth, from small neighborhood-based organizations to large multinational corporations.

## The RPLS Vision

In addition to revenue streams and planning implications, we are ultimately tied together by one often overlooked thing: PEOPLE. We are in the business of people. No matter what aspect of RPLS we emphasize in, we are ultimately connected by people. Being a part of the RPLS field means you have the most important job in the world: helping people lead high quality lives. We do that something that no other major can brag about... we show people how to pursue a better, happier existence. Whether it is cheering on their favorite team with their friends, traveling the world with their spouse, or paddling the Grand Canyon all alone, we give people the tools to find happiness that they would not otherwise have.

We make the world better. By being in RPLS, YOU make the world better... and we are so happy to have you.



Four handwritten signatures in black ink, arranged in two rows. The top row contains two signatures, and the bottom row contains two more. The signatures are stylized and difficult to read.



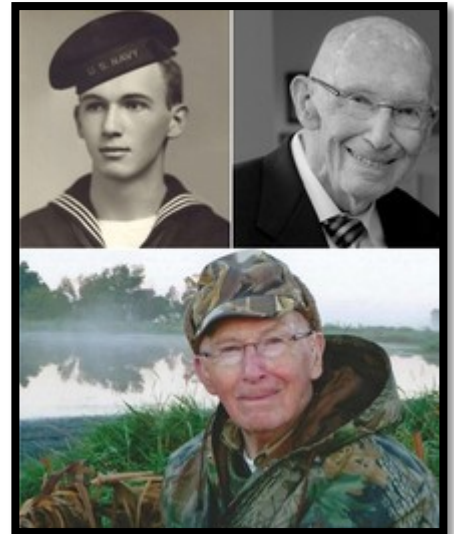
## SECTION ONE: RPLS BACKGROUND

To be a part of RPLS is to be a part of something special. This section details the program history, how to get involved, and some of the faces you will see in your classroom.

### RPLS HISTORY

The Department of Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Services has a long and distinguished history. The RPLS department was created in 1968 and the Bachelor of Science degree in the major has been continuously conferred for the last half century. The department is the only nationally accredited undergraduate RPLS program in the state of Minnesota. RPLS is situated within the College of Allied Health and Nursing at Minnesota State University, Mankato, as we have long recognized the health-based benefits of leisure services.

In 2018, RPLS celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Over the course of the last five decades, the RPLS Department has emerged as a vital contributor and leader in the field, with its influence spanning not only the state, but the region, and the nation. The RPLS Department currently boasts six faculty members each of whom focus on excelling as teachers and fostering student development. Faculty members have real-world experience in one or more of the three major tracks—Resource Management, Leisure Planning and Management, and Therapeutic Recreation—and are dedicated to preparing students for success in their careers.



*A veteran and avid outdoor recreationist, Dr. Don Buchanan was the first RPLS Department Chair.*

### EMERITUS FACULTY

Faculty members who earn emeritus status are unique and important voices in telling the RPLS story. We are grateful to them for their many contributions to the field, the University, and the department. *Left to right: Joanne Ardolf Decker, James T. Jack, Joy Joyner, Re.D., Ron Nickerson, Ph.D., and James Peterson, Ph.D.*



# MEET THE RPLS DEPARTMENT FACULTY

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# HOW DO I APPLY TO BE AN RPLS MAJOR?

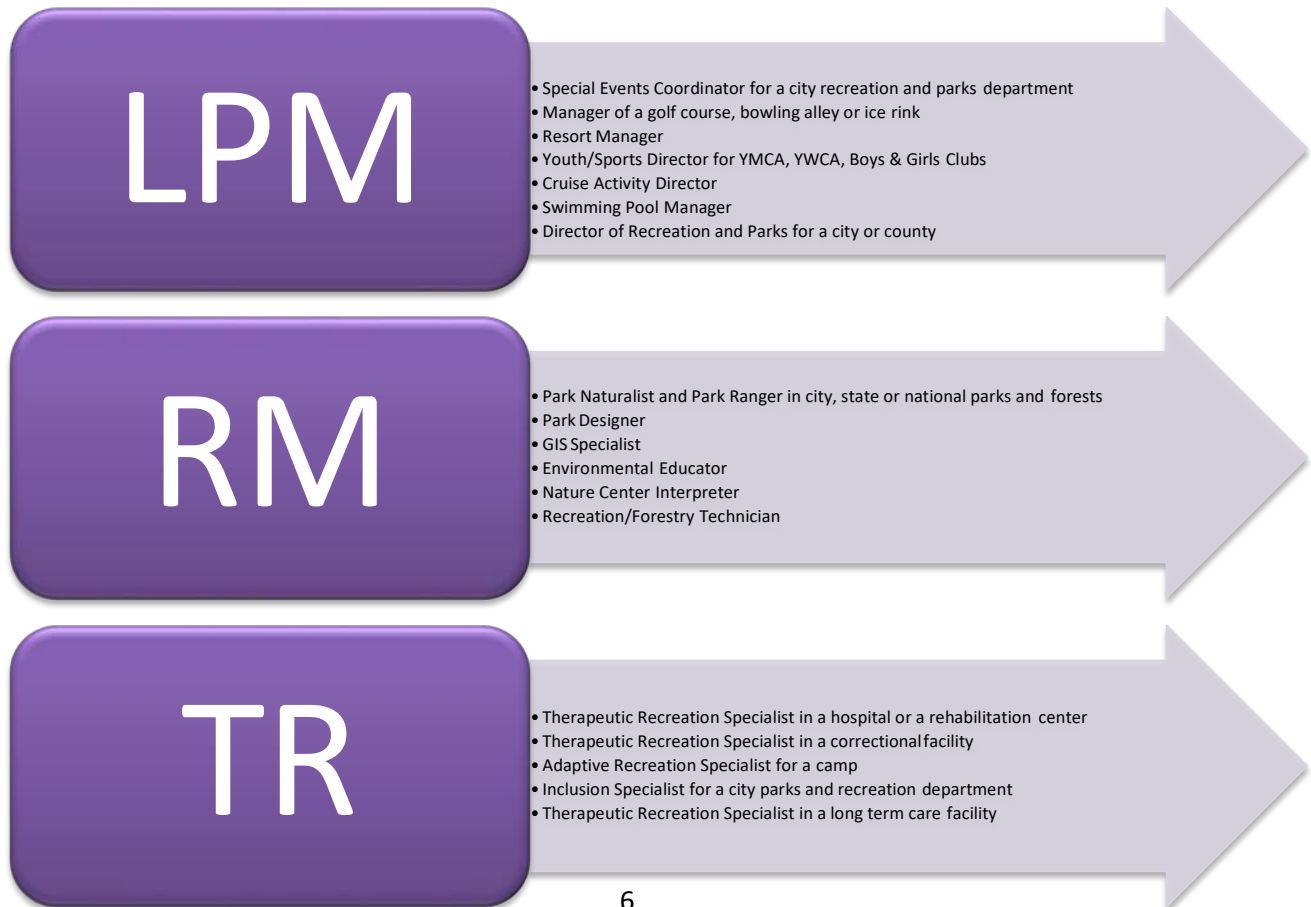
**STEP ONE:** Declare your major using the [Major Button](#)

**STEP TWO:** Submit your [Application for Admission](#)

- **RPLS Applications for Admissions are reviewed three times annually:**
  - March 1 / July 1 / October 1
- **To be considered, students must have:**
  - Completed RPLS 272 Introduction to Recreation, Parks & Leisure Services with a “C” grade of better or departmental permission
  - A minimum of 12 semester earned credit hours
  - A minimum cumulative GPA of 2.00 (2.50 preferred)
  - Completed the RPLS Application for Admission

# HOW DO I CHOOSE AN EMPHASIS AREA?

While all three RPLS emphases have shared attributes, there are also elements that make each unique. Below are some examples of potential career paths for which each emphasis area can prepare you. Throughout our program history, RPLS students have had some of the most exciting and rewarding professional experiences imaginable. Don't see the opportunity you are looking for? We will work with you to find it.





# RPLS ADVISING

By joining RPLS either as a Major, Minor, or Pre-RPLS student, you will be assigned an advisor with interests similar to yours. It is required to meet with your advisor at least once per semester, but it is recommended to do so more frequently. You may switch advisors at any time. To switch advisors, add/drop a major/minor/emphasis, visit: <https://ahn.mnsu.edu/departments/department-of-recreation-parks-leisure-services/current-students/advising/>

## How does my advisor help?

RPLS advisors are your best resource for information about classes, registration, access codes, deadlines, etc. They will help you make sense of your DARS report, navigate E-Services, select classes, apply for graduation, find a practicum, meet like-minded people, and more. If you haven't talk to an RPLS advisor lately, it's always a great day to do so!

# REQUIRED RPLS COURSEWORK

## MSU Mankato General Education Curriculum

Completion of the MSU Mankato General Education Curriculum is a vital part of your education and allows you the important opportunity to explore multiple areas of study. Many students choose to complete their GenEds during their first two years on campus, often integrating RPLS courses along the way.

## RPLS Professional Core Coursework

To complete your degree in RPLS, you must successfully complete both the RPLS core courses and at least one emphasis. In addition to RPLS 272 which is required for admission to the program, RPLS students will take the following courses as part of their professional core:

- RPLS 277** Recreation Leadership (3 credits)
- RPLS 341W** Research Methods in RPLS (3 credits)
- RPLS 373** Recreation Management I:  
Facility Resources (3 credits)
- RPLS 375** Recreation Technology (3 credits)
- RPLS 376** Program Planning in RPLS (4 credits)
- RPLS 473** Recreation Management II:  
Financial Resources (3 credits)
- RPLS 483** Recreation Management III:  
Human Resources (3 credits)
- RPLS 493** Synthesis Seminar (2 credits)
- RPLS 495** Practicum (9 credits)

## RPLS Emphasis-Specific Coursework

In addition to completing your professional core classes, RPLS students will emphasize their education in (at least) one of three areas. Select one of the Career Tracks listed below to complete requirements for the major.

*RPLS students are regularly employed with MSU Campus Recreation, overseeing the high ropes course on campus*



### Leisure Planning and Management Career Track

- RPLS 274** Therapeutic Recreation Services (3 credits)
  - RPLS 282** Wildlife as a Recreation Resource (3 credits)
  - RPLS 465** Event Management (3 credits)
- + Two restricted electives from the list below

### Resource Management Career Track

- RPLS 274** Therapeutic Recreation Services (3 credits)
  - RPLS 282** Wildlife as a Recreation Resource (3 credits)
  - RPLS 475** Public Land Use Policies (3 credits)
- + Two restricted electives from the list below

### Therapeutic Recreation Career Track

- RPLS 274** Therapeutic Recreation Services (3 credits)
- RPLS 282** Wildlife as a Recreation Resource (3 credits)
- RPLS 440** Therapeutic Recreation Assessment (3 credits)
- RPLS 445** Foundations of Therapeutic Recreation Practice (3 credits)
- RPLS 447W** Therapeutic Recreation Process (3 credits)
- RPLS 450** Therapeutic Recreation Techniques (3 credits)
- RPLS 489** Advancement of the Therapeutic Recreation Profession (3 credits)

#### *Required for National Certification (CTRS):*

Please see Dr. Wise, Therapeutic Recreation Advisor.

- BIOL 220** Human Anatomy (4 credits)
- HP 348** Structural Kinesiology and Biomechanics (3 credits)
- KSP 235** Human Development (3 credits)
- Or **PSYC 343** Introduction to Developmental Psychology (4 credits)
- PSYC 455** Abnormal Psychology (4 credits)



Above: A Rec Club hiking event at Minneopa State Park Below: Outdoor programming often involves elements of LPM, RM, and TR

## RPLS RESTRICTED ELECTIVES

In addition to required courses, RPLS electives are also offered on a less frequent basis for students seeking to learn more about RPLS specialties. Regularly offered courses are listed below; be sure to speak with your advisor and consult the course catalog for more details.

- RPLS 260** Planes, Trains, and Automobiles: An Introduction to Travel and Tourism (3 credits)
- RPLS 278** Leisure and Lifestyle (3 credits)
- RPLS 325** Programming for Outdoor Settings (3 credits)
- RPLS 350** Methods of Interpretation in RPLS (3 credits)
- RPLS 378** Commercial Recreation and Tourism (3 credits)
- RPLS 457W** Transdisciplinary Research in Health-Related Fields (3 credits)
- RPLS 478** Review of Outdoor Recreation Research (3 credits)
- RPLS 479** Wildland Recreation Management (3 credits)
- RPLS 481** Park Planning (3 credits)
- RPLS 485** Selected Topics (1-3 credits)
- RPLS 499** Individual Study (1-4 credits)



## RPLS MINOR REQUIREMENTS

To complete a minor in RPLS, you need to take the following 13 credits in the RPLS Core:

**RPLS 272** Introduction to Recreation, Parks & Leisure Services (3 credits)

**RPLS 277** Recreation Leadership (3 credits)

**RPLS 376** Program Planning in RPLS (4 credits)

**RPLS 473** Recreation Management II: Financial Resources (3 credits)

In addition, you need to take 9 credits (3 courses) from one of the career tracks listed above. Meet with an advisor from the career track you are interested in to select specific courses and add your minor via E-services by clicking the Major Button: <https://mankato.mnsu.edu/academics/course-planning-and-registration/academic-advising/university-advising/university-advising-tools/major-button/>



*Faculty celebrating 50 Years of Fun in May 2019! Left to right: Drs. Burk, Hicks, Fuller, Montandon, and Wise*

## SECTION TWO: RPLS PRACTICUM & FIELD EXPERIENCE

In addition to your on-campus coursework, the completion of your degree in the Minnesota State University Department of Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Services is contingent on two facets of professional development: Field Experience and Practicum. Field experiences take place during the first three years of the undergraduate program and after all other coursework has been complete, are followed by enrollment in a professional practicum (RPLS 495) during your senior year. Completion of field experience hours is a requirement of participation in your senior practicum.

In addition to the guidance provided here, be sure to communicate with your advisor and visit: <https://ahn.mnsu.edu/departments/department-of-recreation-parks-leisure-services/current-students/practicum/>

### FIELD EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS

Field experiences take place outside of class settings prior to your senior practicum. These field experiences may consist of work or volunteer experience, preferably at the operational level (i.e., face-to-face leadership, park maintenance, camp counselor, assistant to full time staff, etc.) in a leisure services agency. Tending bar and waiting tables in a restaurant or working in the retail industry are not acceptable field experiences. It is preferred that students accumulate several field experiences during their freshman through junior year. Field experiences are given no academic credit and are not supervised by the University. A minimum of 150 documented and verified hours of experience are required as prerequisites to the senior practicum (RPLS 495). A link to the documentation form is provided in the Appendix of this document.

#### **What's the point?**

Senior practicums have grown increasingly competitive. Each field experience will contribute to your professional preparation and may be later listed as professional experience on your resume. In short, the better your resume, the better your senior practicum... and the faster you find a job after graduation.

#### **Field Experience Policies**

- The Field Experience must be completed after you have declared RPLS as a major and before you are eligible to complete a practicum.
- The Field Experience is not to occur simultaneously with your practicum.
- The Field Experience is to be completed prior to your Senior year.

#### **Tips for Completing the Field Experience Successfully**

- Select an agency that relates to your career interest or your emphasis area. Make this fieldwork experience work for YOU! Be sure to talk with your advisor.
- Try not to select an agency where you are currently working. Fieldwork experience is an opportunity for you to expand your horizons and gain new insights into your chosen career.
- Once you identify an appropriate site for your fieldwork, set a target date to make your first contact with the agency and set up an interview for that week. Do not put this off and do not assume that your contact person is sitting by the phone waiting for your call.
- Meet with your advisor to confirm the approval of your potential field experience. Not every position meets the high standards of the RPLS program, so be sure to communicate early and often with your advisor to confirm if a specific position is appropriate.

### **Field Experience Guidelines**

- Call the contact person in advance and make an appointment to discuss arrangements for your field experience hours and ways to meet your goals.
- Loyalty to the agency is essential. Be punctual and conscientious in fulfilling your duties.
- Accept supervision graciously.
- Work your scheduled hours. ALWAYS call the contact person if you cannot meet your obligation.
- Have a professional attitude; maintain the standards of the agency at all times.
- Regard all information that you hear and see as confidential.
- Be dignified, courteous, and considerate.
- Take any problems, criticisms, or suggestions to the contact person (supervisor).
- Make your work of the highest quality; take pride in what you do!
- Be your best self, and have a good time!

### **Necessary Form**

Documenting your field experience hours must be done using the Field Experience Hours Form (Section Five). Forms may be submitted either in person or electronically to your academic advisor and may be done at any time prior by or before the beginning of your senior year.

## **PRACTICUM REQUIREMENTS (RPLS 495)**

The MSU Mankato RPLS Department has a half-century long tradition of producing the finest, most capable professionals in Minnesota. In keeping with those high expectations, the RPLS Department must maintain high standards of excellence for your practicum. Below is a summary of minimum requirements and expectations. As always, if you have specific questions, ask your RPLS Faculty Advisor.

### **RPLS 495 – Practicum (9 credits)**

Pre-requisites:

- RPLS 375 Recreation Technology and Career Preparedness
- RPLS Completed Field Experience Form(s) totaling at least 150 hours
- Maintain a 2.5 GPA in the major
- Earn a “C” or better in each RPLS Class

**Course Policy:** You must be officially registered for RPLS 495 before you may begin your practicum

**Instructor:** Your RPLS Faculty Advisor

### **Course Description**

This is the capstone experience for your undergraduate degree in Recreation, Parks and Leisure Services. It is an opportunity for you to gain professional work experience under an agency supervisor. The Practicum requires a minimum of 560 hours of service at a Department-approved agency where you work full time for at least 14 consecutive weeks during your senior year.

### **Course Objectives**

Through the practicum experience, you will: demonstrate skills and apply knowledge related to the delivery of recreation and leisure services by receiving an average rating of “3” or higher on the final evaluation form completed by the agency supervisor.



## Requirements

- 560 hours of service over an extended period of time, not less than 14 consecutive weeks;
- Periodic reports to your faculty advisor;
- Completion of other assignments as required by your advisor;
- Compliance with the policies and procedures of the cooperating agency;
- Satisfactory final evaluation completed by your agency supervisor

## Evaluation

Your agency supervisor will complete a mid-term and a final evaluation form and discuss each of them with you. Your faculty advisor will base final Pass (P) or Fail (F) largely, but not exclusively, on these evaluations, your periodic reports, and other assignments.

# PRACTICUM-RELATED COURSEWORK

In the RPLS Department, we have required classes that help ensure your success in obtaining and completing your senior practicum. Specifically, those courses are RPLS 375 and RPLS 495.

## RPLS 375 – Recreation Technology and Career Preparedness

This course is designed to be taken two semesters before students complete their practicum. It will help students identify and secure a practicum while helping students establish reasonable expectations for a quality practicum experience.

## RPLS 495 – Practicum

The Practicum, which is one full semester of professional work experience, is completed at the end of the student's course work and requires 560 hours of service at a department approved agency where the student works full time for 14 consecutive weeks. Written permission is required from the student's advisor one semester in advance. Prerequisite: RPLS 375 and completion of field experience hours. Completion of major coursework with a 2.5 GPA in the major courses. RPLS 495 may not be taken simultaneously with any other classes and all other coursework should be completed prior to enrolling in RPLS 495. 9 credits.



*RPLS students have opportunities to gain experience working with a wide variety of age groups.*

## PRACTICUM EDUCATIONAL VALUE

The practicum is an educational course offered at Minnesota State University, Mankato that provides you with a “hands on” experience in the Recreation and Leisure Services profession. It is an opportunity for you to apply what you have learned in the classroom to real situations under professional supervision. It is required of all students majoring in Recreation, Parks and Leisure Services after all course work has been completed.

During the practicum, the work place becomes your classroom as you receive “on the job” training at an approved agency. You will serve the agency in the agreed capacity for a minimum of 560 hours (14 weeks – 40 hours per week) and the agency will give you an opportunity to gain experience and confidence while completing these requirements. You will be supervised both by the agency and by your faculty advisor.

Remember that while we encourage you to find a paid position, a practicum is not a “just a job.” A practicum should provide you an opportunity to experience all aspects of an agency/organization and to apply what you have learned in your classes to real life situations. Working as a camp counselor for a YMCA is not a practicum. For a practicum in this setting, you would work with the Youth Programs Coordinator where you would attend staff and board meetings, set in on interviews for summer or fall program staff, create the schedule for the summer youth tennis program, help write brochure copy for the Fall brochure; shadow for a day the Director, facility manager, and fitness center coordinator as well as spend time at the front desk.

## PRACTICUM REGISTRATION

Selecting a practicum may feel like a daunting task. It is an important and final step in your education and preparation to work in the recreation and parks profession. However, it is also a very exciting time for you. It’s the beginning of the next great adventure in your life. Start early, research like crazy, and talk to your advisor. At the latest, you should begin the process 4-5 months before commencement. Keep in mind that your last semester is going to be a very busy one. It can take 6-8 weeks to complete the selection process so don’t put this off! You will register for the practicum after all your major course work has been completed with a minimum 2.5 grade point average in your major and earned at least a “C” grade in each of your RPLS courses. The practicum is usually completed during the semester prior to graduation – after all of your other coursework is complete. The course is available each semester and during the summer.

## PRACTICUM GRADING

The 14 weeks of your practicum may not fit within the calendar dates of the semester. For example, your agency may ask you to begin your practicum in mid-June and complete it in mid-September. If this should happen, your Faculty Advisor will submit a grade of “In-Progress” (IP) when grade rosters are due. After you have completed your 14 weeks and your final report has been received, your Faculty Advisor will then change the IP to a “Pass” (P) or “Fail” (F) whichever is deemed appropriate. Your official graduation date will then be the end of that semester. In the example above, your graduation date would be July, 20\_\_\_\_.

## AGENCY SUPERVISOR EXPECTATIONS

- Maintain high quality staff to provide quality practicums for students.
- Interview students before agreeing to the practicum.
- When appropriate, be certified, registered, or licensed by the recognized regulatory body.
- Make available at least one supervisor to meet with the student no less than weekly to review goals, objectives, and general progress.
- Provide student with as much supervision and/or freedom as that student's competence demands.
- Design the practicum experience so that the student will experience the many different facets of the overall organization.
- Provide supportive, learning atmosphere.
- Prepare and submit mid-term evaluation.
- Prepare and submit final evaluation.

## FACULTY ADVISOR EXPECTATIONS

- Assist student with the writing of practicum goals and objectives.
- Assist student in identifying practicum sites.
- Approve final practicum site.
- Evaluate all reports from student and agency.
- Maintain open communication with student and agency throughout the practicum.
- Visit student at the practicum site when possible.
- Determine and process final grade for the practicum



*Greta Wintersteen (RPLS Class of 2017) worked closely with faculty during her time at MSU, including Drs. Montandon, Burk, and Wise*



## SECTION THREE: RPLS RESOURCES & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Being successful in the RPLS Department does not simply mean passing your classes, it also requires the ability to network and communicate with RPLS professionals in the field. What follows are some helpful tips for effective communication.

### RPLS SPECIAL EVENTS

#### ***Professional Connection***

Get to know RPLS professionals from across Minnesota during a morning of enjoyable conversation. Held during fall semester, Professional Connection has a long-standing tradition of facilitating quality interactions between students and agency professionals who may one day hire you.

#### ***Thanksgiving and Senior Sendoff Kickball***

Organized in fall and spring respectively by the Rec Club, Thanksgiving and our Senior Sendoff Kickball game are two long-standing traditions in our program. More than that, they are a ton of fun! All students regardless of class rank are encouraged to attend.

#### ***College of Allied Health and Nursing Community Fair***

Advocating for the health of others is at the core of everything we do in RPLS. The Community Fair, typically held annually each April is a celebratory event designed to engage Mankato and surrounding area residents in a dialogue about health behaviors. It is a great volunteer opportunity for RPLS students and allows us better insight into the many benefits of the other programs in our college.

### REC CLUB

Short for the Recreation Majors Club, Rec Club is the longstanding student-led source for fun and professional development. A great way to meet new people and learn more about the field, Rec Club holds regular meetings and special events designed to make your RPLS experience the best it can be.

Membership provides you access to the Rec Club mail list, where you will be notified of jobs and practicum possibilities. Rec Club meets bi-weekly.

For more information, visit:

<https://www.facebook.com/mnsu.recclub>



*Rec Club – where fun and learning overlap!*

# MSU CAMPUS RESOURCES

MSU Mankato provides a wide variety of free or inexpensive campus resources to help you succeed. Below is a partial list of available resources including academic, professional, and personal to help you enjoy your time on campus. For more information about the services listed below or for a more comprehensive list, visit: <https://mankato.mnsu.edu/university-life/campus-services/>

## **Career Development Center**

Looking for a second opinion about your career? The CDC is like one-stop shopping for answering questions related to resume and cover letters, job postings, and general career advice.

## **Non-RPLS Career Fairs**

Several departments around campus host events that often include RPLS-related fields. While they are not tailored specifically to RPLS students, there can often be valuable opportunities and/or interesting employers. Non-RPLS career fairs include: Engineering and Business, among others. Specific dates/times for most career fairs are listed on the Career Development Center website.

## **Center for Academic Success**

Struggling with classes? The Center for Academic Success provides assistance with even the toughest classes, including speech writing, math, and more.

## **Women's Center**

The Women's Center provides numerous programs and events each year. Topics range from sexual assault and sexual violence to women's health and wellness to women's history and empowerment. The Women's Center is home to the Violence Awareness and Response Program, and partners with numerous programs and organizations on campus and in the community. Annual events include, Women of Courage and Vision Awards, Love Your Body Day, and Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

## **LGBT Center (LGBTC)**

The LGBTC provides support, advocacy, referral, and sense of community to LGBTQQA students through education, programming, and activism. They provide resources, information, and referrals for the MSU community on queer, bisexual, lesbian, transgender, gay, and questioning issues.

## **Center for Education Abroad and Away**

The "Study Abroad Office" helps students prepare for all aspects of a potential study abroad experience. RPLS students are encouraged to explore the world through their studies, however you should plan to communicate your intentions to the RPLS academic advisor soon after arriving in the department as such trips can influence your graduation timeline.

## **Veteran's Resource Center**

The VRC provides assistance, peer support, and educational events for all students impacted by military service. Veterans, current military members, and military family members are encouraged to visit for personalized information about both on and off campus resources available to meet their unique needs.

## **Accessibility Resources**

Accessibility Resources ensures that all students with disabilities have equal access to all opportunities at Minnesota State Mankato. They coordinate accommodations for eligible students and serve as a resource for faculty, staff and the University community in their efforts to assure access for all.

### **Institutional Diversity**

Institutional Diversity supports a multicultural educational experience for students, faculty, staff and the greater community by encouraging access, opportunity and success. They support students and build leaders for a global society.

## **PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS/CONFERENCES**

In the RPLS field, there are numerous associations with specific foci that allow students an additional window into the professional world. Membership can have valuable perks such as information on career opportunities and trends in the field. Many also have electronic job boards. Moreover, many of these associations host annual conferences where members gather to network and learn from each other.

### **Parks and Recreation**

- Minnesota Parks and Recreation Association
- Southern Minnesota Recreation and Parks Association
- National Recreation and Park Association
- Society of Health and Physical Educators
- World Leisure and Recreation Association

### **Tourism and Commercial Recreation**

- Travel and Tourism Research Association
- Explore Minnesota Tourism Conference
- World Travel and Tourism Council
- World Tourism Organization
- Resort and Commercial Recreation Association

### **Event and Meeting Management**

- International Festivals and Events Association
- International Association of Assembly Managers
- International Special Events Society
- Professional Convention Management Association

### **Therapeutic Recreation**

- Minnesota Therapeutic Recreation Association
- American Therapeutic Recreation Association
- National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification

### **Outdoor Recreation**

- American Camp Association
- Association for Experiential Education
- National Association for Interpretation
- Student Conservation Association
- Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education



*The MSU Climbing Wall is a favorite place for RPLS majors to work and play*



# PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

When preparing to enter the job market, there is often value in being able to demonstrate to prospective employers that you have a skill set beyond that which you procured in the classroom. Professional certifications are widely recognized ways to confirm you have a particular set of skills, and they can often make you a more marketable candidate. In the RPLS field, there are numerous options depending on your area(s) of interest. Below is a partial list.

- **Aquatics**  
Aquatic Facility Operator; Water Safety Instructor; Jeff Ellis and Associates Certifications; Certified Pool/Spa Operator
- **Facilities**  
Certified Facilities Executive; Certified Facility Management Professional
- **Fitness**  
Personal trainer certifications (via the American Council on Exercise, American Fitness Professional and Associates, Aerobics and Fitness Association of America, National Strength and Conditioning Association); Primary Group Exercise Certification; Group Fitness Instructor Certification
- **Land and Resource Management**  
Geographic Information Systems Certifications(GIS); Commercial Driver’s License
- **Outdoor Recreation**  
Wilderness First Responder; Leave No Trace Master Educator; Wilderness Education Association National Standard Program; American Canoe Association Instructor; American Canoe Association Swiftwater Rescue; American Mountain Guides Association Certification; National Association for Search and Rescue Courses; Professional Ski Instructor; Certified Heritage Interpreter; Certified Interpretive Manager; Certified Interpretive Planner; American Camp Association Professional Certification
- **Public Parks and Recreation and Therapeutic Recreation**  
Certified Park and Recreation Professional; Certified Playground Safety Inspector; Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist
- **Risk Management**  
Certified Risk Planner; Fellow of Certified Risk Planner; Certified Risk Trainer; Certified Crisis Consultant
- **Sports, Meetings, and Events**  
Certified Event Planner; Certified Project Manager; Certified Festival and Events Executive; Certified Meeting Professional; Certified Special Events Professional
- **Tourism**
  - Certified Destination Management Executive; Travel and Tourism Professional; Certified Hotel Administrator
  - Certified Room Division Executive; Certified Hotel Educator; Certified Hotel Revenue Manager; Certified Revenue Management Executive; Certified Hospitality Digital Marketer; Certified Hospitality Sales Executive; Certified in Hospitality Sales Competencies; Certified Meeting Professional; Certified in Exhibition Management



*Certifications are not only useful to develop relevant skills, but can help set you apart from other potential job candidates*

## SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

There are many scholarships associated with the RPLS Department. Scholarships are a potentially valuable way to help subsidize your tuition, as well as develop professional relationships with individuals inside and outside the department. A few are identified below. Information about lots of other scholarships can be found on the MSU Scholarship Finder located at: <https://mnsu.academicworks.com/> Or on the RPLS website at: <https://ahn.mnsu.edu/departments/department-of-recreation-parks-leisure-services/current-students/scholarships/>

### **Joanne Decker Scholarship**

For more information visit: <https://mnsu.academicworks.com/opportunities/10065>

### **Southern Minnesota Recreation and Park Association Scholarship**

For more information visit: <http://mnrpa.org/smrpa/>

### **Minnesota Therapeutic Recreation Association Scholarship**

For more information visit: <http://www.mtra.memberlodge.org/>

### **National Park and Recreation Association Scholarships**

For more information visit: <https://www.nrpa.org/careers-education/scholarships/>



*A wide variety of professional experiences is the key to developing a resume that will catch the eyes of potential employers. Students pictured here are with Dr. Montandon on our RPLS 490 – Cruise Culture course.*

# SUGGESTED BENCHMARKS

When it comes to enhancing your resume, students often have difficulty knowing what they should be doing and when they should be doing it. The list below identifies suggested benchmarks to maximize your potential for success.

- **Freshman Year**
  - By the end of your freshman year, you should have
    - Applied for admission to RPLS Program
    - Met and gotten acquainted with your academic advisor
    - Joined Rec Club
    - Explored interesting opportunities in other RSOs
    - Begun to gain professional experience via part-time work and/or intermittent volunteerism during the school year
    - Using your coursework, have identified strategies to improve time management
    - Identified your plans for a summer job
- **Sophomore Year**
  - By the end of your sophomore year, you should have
    - Maintained membership and increased activity within Rec Club
    - Continued gaining professional experience during the school year by continuing to work in previous positions and/or identifying new agencies from which to work and learn
    - Explored potential relevant certifications
    - Begun to identify concepts from your coursework that can be applied to professional settings
    - Identified preliminary positions that may be suitable for your senior practicum
    - Identified your plans for a summer job
- **Junior Year**
  - By the end of your junior year, you should have
    - Applied for at least one leadership position in Rec Club
    - Continued gaining professional experience during the school year by continuing to work in previous positions and/or identifying new agencies from which to work and learn
    - Continued to identify concepts from your coursework that can be applied to professional settings
    - Narrowed your list of positions that may be suitable for your senior practicum
    - Identified your plans for a summer job
- **Senior Year**
  - By the end of your senior year, you will have
    - Completed at least one term in a Rec Club leadership position
    - Gained valuable professional experience via school year and summer positions
    - Applied to, accepted, and completed your senior practicum
    - A resume that is on par with the finest recent graduates in the country
    - Earned one or more relevant certifications
    - Come to know the many ways in which your academic training helps you accomplish professional success
    - Identified your post-practicum / post-graduation plans
    - Become uniquely prepared for the challenges that await you in your professional exploits



## SECTION FOUR: AFTER GRADUATION

Too many students treat “The Real World” as though it is separate from your academic studies. Those students are often grossly underprepared for the life that awaits them following graduation. In the RPLS Department, we pride ourselves on ensuring that students have every opportunity to prepare themselves for the challenges that lie ahead.

### **Your first job**

One of the benefits of the RPLS Practicum is that students will enter the workforce with lots of experience understanding how to identify and obtain a job they are excited about. To be sure, your first job is not going to be your best job... but RPLS students are well-trained and well-qualified for the wide variety of opportunities that await in the post-graduation world. Depending on the strength of your resume, most RPLS graduates are placed at job in the field within six months of graduation... some quite a bit sooner. Your first job is likely to be an entry-level or middle management position. Both come with unique challenges. Regardless, you should plan on spending 1-2 years in your first job, at which time your experience will in many cases open doors to promotions either within or outside of your current agency.

In the first few years following graduation, students are given lots of advice. Here are my top four points:

1) *Avoid resume gaps*

Not only is unemployment bad for your wallet, it is bad for your resume. RPLS majors typically have a strong background working with people, which opens a lot of doors. Don't be afraid to take a short term position while you seek out the ideal position.

2) *Don't jump ship too early/often*

Just as bad as a resume filled with gaps is one that bounces around. While a six-month practicum is a long one, a six-month JOB is not. If you jump from job to job every few months it could ultimately make you less likely to be hired. After all, employers do not want to invest time and money training someone who is going to leave a few months later. A minimum of one year in a position is usually acceptable.

3) *Keep learning*

One of the things you learn during your practicum is that every position can teach you something. Even if you are not in your dream position right away, make sure you are getting something out of the experience. Learning what to do and what not to do. Your practicum encourages you to reflect upon and make meaning of your experiences. Continue to do so after you leave MSU.

4) *Give yourself an outlet*

RPLS is what we do, and very often who we are. At some point you will work a 16 hour day or work seven straight days (or more). That is okay... that is sometimes what the job will require. However, be sure to give yourself something healthy outside of work that motivates and inspires you. Spend time with family, join a club, pick up a hobby, go for a walk in the park; but no matter what, take care of yourself. Not only will you be happier, but you will actually do better work as well. It is a win-win.

## Alumni Life

A common mistake that many recent graduates make is that they do not keep in touch with their home department. In RPLS, we pride ourselves on maintaining strong relationships with our alumni and your post-graduation accomplishments are part of how we measure our own success. As such, we maintain regular contact with our alumni, keeping you up to date on job postings, networking opportunities, and special events. Most alumni are automatically added to our email roster, but if you are ever unsure, reach out to your former advisor. There are thousands of RPLS alumni scattered across the globe. Staying involved with is not just good for your career, it can be a lot of fun too.



*Alumni membership begins on graduation day, but it is a club you are a part of for life.*

## Graduate School

The Experiential Education Master's Program is part of the RPLS Department Family. This world-renowned program has produced countless professionals who positively influence the world around them. For more information, please reach out to Dr. Julie Carlson.

Every faculty member will have slightly different advice about whether you should go to grad school or when you should do so. As such, you should feel encouraged you to speak with both faculty and professionals, and take or leave these thoughts as you see fit.

Graduate school is not for everyone.... That is why not everyone attends. To be sure, some positions will require a Master's degree, and in those cases, it is a great option to consider. However, in recent years, a trend has emerged in which students who not get their ideal job immediately after graduation went straight back to school. This can often backfire, particularly if the reason they did not get the job was a lack of experience. Gaining professional experience prior to graduate school has three practical benefits: 1) It will help you get a promotion without attending grad school, 2) It will actually help you get accepted to grad school, and 3) Once you are in grad school, you will be able to ask better questions and be better at solving problems.

In other words, it is okay if you do not want to go to grad school... and it is okay if you do. However, the most successful grad students and professionals are those who do not simply attend grad school because they have no better options. Instead, they are successful because they have a clear understanding of WHY they are or are not attending grad school.



## AFTERWORD

Virtually every high school guidance counselor talks about the difference between a job and a career. A job is something you do, usually from 9 to 5. On the other hand, a career becomes part of your identity; is not just something you do, it is part of who you are. Certainly there is truth in that dichotomy. However, I believe that if those high school guidance counselors had been RPLS majors, they would have added another category... your CALLING. RPLS is something that calls out to us. We don't always recognize it right away... but at some point freshman or sophomore year, we find ourselves in a class, and we just *know* it is right. Only then can we fully understand that this field is not simply about jobs or careers. Rather, it is about the feeling that we are in the right place. Not everyone gets to feel that. Hold onto it and don't let go. Even if not everyone around you understands it, don't let it go.

To be a member of the RPLS Family is to be proud. We are proud of meeting the academic challenges set before us. We are proud to learn from those around us. We are proud to be a part of the community. We are proud of playing a vital role in making the world a better place for others. However, being part of the RPLS Family does not come without challenges. You will be challenged to be better than you ever thought you could... and there will be times when you do not think you can do it, or when you do not think it is worth it to try. As with any family, there will be moments that are unhappy or uncomfortable. Part of your academic training is to work through those feelings and develop strategies for success – however you define it. You are surrounded by faculty who care for you and are invested in your success. When you combine their insight and dedication with your hard work in and out of class, not only will you earn a degree, you will have found your calling. –JH



## SECTION FIVE – IMPORTANT FORMS

Below are links to forms that will be useful during your time as an RPLS student. All forms are also available on the RPLS website: <https://ahn.mnsu.edu/departments/department-of-recreation-parks-leisure-services/current-students/>

### **Index of important forms**

RPLS Application for Admission:

[https://mnsu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_efHhatEGlqRaALL](https://mnsu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_efHhatEGlqRaALL)

Field Experience Verification:

<https://ahn.mnsu.edu/departments/department-of-recreation-parks-leisure-services/field-experience/>

Rec Club Majors Club Membership:

<https://ahn.mnsu.edu/academic-programs/recreation-parks-leisure-services/rec-club/>

Practicum Application Worksheet:

<https://ahn.mnsu.edu/departments/department-of-recreation-parks-leisure-services/current-students/>

Practicum Agency-Student Agreement:

<https://ahn.mnsu.edu/departments/department-of-recreation-parks-leisure-services/current-students/>

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Revised: June 2020