

Origins of the Department of Recreation and Park Administration Clemson University

Narrative by:

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The South Carolina Recreation and Park Society, Inc. [founded 1955] (now the South Carolina Recreation and Park Association), an affiliate of the National Recreation and Park Association, is the state professional organization for workers in recreation, parks, and other associated fields.

At that time, there were university programs, majors or minors, in recreation at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and the University of Georgia. There were no such programs in South Carolina. Other dominant programs were at Texas A&M, Oregon State, and Pennsylvania State universities.

Some time in the late 1950s or early 1960s, the leaders of the South Carolina Recreation and Park Society saw the need for a university level education program to prepare park and recreation professionals for the many positions of leadership in South Carolina.

As the strength of the South Carolina Recreation and Park Society was based in the Columbia area, Society leaders asked the University of South Carolina president to establish a professional education program at that university. That request was turned down.

Subsequently, the Society leaders approached Clemson University President Dr. Robert Cook Edwards. He welcomed the idea. The process of getting approval from the Board of Trustees and the South Carolina Commission of Higher Education was initiated, culminating in the Department of Recreation and Park Administration (RPA) welcoming it's first students in Fall of 1966.

[I am not aware of the exact time line of the events leading to the establishment of the Department. University Archives should be able to supply that information. This would have been a multi-year effort requiring approvals at various levels of the University and government, and the development and approval of the curriculum.]

The initial curriculum offered was a one-track program. All students completed the same curriculum leading to a Bachelor of Science degree.

NOTE: At some time in the late 1970's, President Edwards stated to the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education that no department at Clemson University was more focused on the needs of the people of South Carolina than the Department of Recreation and Park Administration.

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