

# **IDENTIFYING GAPS IN CURRICULUM WITH THE IDENTIFIED KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES IMPORTANT TO HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT GRADUATES**

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## **Introduction**

Hospitality and Tourism Management curricula aligned with the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) necessary for success will properly prepare students to meet industry expectations. Hospitality and tourism programs are increasing in number and popularity, with degrees offered by two-year and four-year colleges, as part of business schools, and as stand-alone programs. Many programs have a similar core curriculum with courses in business management, accounting, finance, human resource management, hospitality law, information technology, and marketing. Some programs allow specialization in one of the traditional areas of hospitality such as food and beverage, lodging, tourism, recreation, or event management. In addition, an internship is often required.

Due to the broad scope of positions open to hospitality students upon graduation, it is difficult to determine which KSAs are important to all or most graduates, and how these KSAs differ from those taught in traditional business programs. Moreover, the teaching of some core areas, such as information technology, is problematic due to rapid advances in the field, non-standardization of the technology and the high cost of software (Mandabach, VanLeeuwen, & Bloomquist, 2001). Soft topics, such as teamwork, listening skills, verbal and written communication skills, and professionalism are often given short shrift in curriculum development but are given high rankings of importance by both recent graduates and upper level managers (Tesone & Ricci, 2006).

## **Purpose**

The study was undertaken to identify gaps in undergraduate academic preparation and the knowledge, skills and abilities expected by the industry. It investigated the KSAs utilized by hospitality and tourism undergraduates in their current positions and will suggest how to align curriculum with the industry's needs for entry-level positions while still preparing students to progress to upper management.

## **Methods**

University hospitality and tourism management alumni one to five years post-graduation of a Midwestern university were surveyed. The survey asked alumni which KSAs were most important in their current positions and how well their HTM program prepared them to perform on those KSAs. Additionally, the survey went beyond the formal curriculum by exploring the importance of internship experiences and extra-curricular activities such as club involvement and study abroad.

## **References**

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