

September, 1997

SPRE member's name
Address

Dear (first name),

There's been a disturbing trend in our field over the past decade. Some of our best departments of recreation and leisure studies at universities across the United States have been shut down, downsized and/or combined with other non-leisure related programs. This trend has resulted in the displacement and/or early retirement of many of our colleagues. It has simultaneously resulted in the loss of several graduate and doctoral-degree granting programs and has undoubtedly contributed to a decrease in the number of students interested in pursuing doctorates and/or enrolling in doctoral programs in our field.

Alarmed at the potential long-term impact of this trend, several of our colleagues from the Academy of Leisure Sciences and SPRE collectively pooled their personal financial resources and asked for financial assistance from many of you in an attempt to begin to reverse this cycle. In 1991, they launched the "Future Scholars" program through the Academy of Leisure Sciences. This program targets bright, highly motivated students at the Master's degree level and provides them with a gratis trip to the National Recreation and Park Association Congress so that they can meet and talk with scholars in our field and be courted by representatives from different doctoral-degree granting programs across the country. To date, 34 students have participated in this program from the United States, Canada and most recently, from Australia.

We recently surveyed "Future Scholar" alumni in an attempt to begin to track students as they pursued degrees in higher education and/or continued advancement as professionals in the field. To date, three "Future Scholar" alumni have completed doctorates and five are currently pursuing doctoral degrees and of that number, three are studying in departments of recreation and leisure studies. Two "Future Scholar" alumni--participants in the first class of 1991--have completed their doctorates and are currently working at universities in the United States. The majority of those completing the survey said that they would be interested in pursuing doctorates.

In responding to questions about the "value" of the "Future Scholars" program, several participants said the benefits of their participation in the program included:

- * "Networking with my peers and the 'established' scholars in our field. Getting to know people and people getting to know me were crucial in my follow through with the grad school idea and will certainly help me in the future with my career, and, more importantly, a vision for what can be done in our field."
- * "The personal introductions to key people in our field (with similar interests to mine). Also, the warmth, support of and interest displayed by academicians, researchers/scholars that I met and was introduced to through the program. Many friendships and professional contacts established through the "Future Scholars" program are still in place and I am now working collaboratively with individuals on a number of research projects."
- * Being introduced to all the scholars that author the course textbooks--to talk "leisure" with the experts in the field.

Several survey respondents said that had it not been for this program, they would not have considered and/or pursued a doctoral program. One Future Scholar alumni said, "I had never seriously considered pursuing a doctoral degree before participating in this program." Future scholar alumni who completed the surveys were, overall, very complimentary of the program. Their comments are illustrated in the words of this 1996 recipient:

"Not only did the award provide me with the opportunity to travel to Kansas City, Missouri, to attend the National Recreation and Park Association annual conference, it also allowed me the opportunity to meet, on a more personal level, many of the 'movers and shakers' of the profession. This, in itself, was worth the 23 hour trip (from Australia) to the conference. My fellow Future Scholar award recipients, both past and present, were a delight to meet and to talk to, and I have maintained close contact with several of them since the conference--swapping research ideas and reference materials."

These are the comments and the sentiments of the next generation of scholars in our field.

Imagine what it would have been like if you had had this opportunity. For some, the Future Scholars program solidifies their intent to pursue a doctorate. For others, it helps them to decide that they want to pursue a career in the field. Regardless of their professional choices, this program does, nevertheless, provide students with an opportunity to "imagine" their future as scholars and/or as professionals in our field.

For the past six years the program has been subsidized by a few of our colleagues. If this program is to continue, we must receive additional financial support from you and from other members of SPRE. We recently asked Future Scholar Alumni for their support of the program and received \$445 to date. This is a good start, but we need at least \$5,000 to sponsor six students this year in Salt Lake City. NRPA has typically agreed to waive the registration fee, but we still need to cover the costs of travel, accommodations and food.

Your donation today is an important investment in the future of our profession.

Thank you for your support of our Future Scholars.

Sincerely,
Janna Rankin
President, SPRE

Karla Henderson
President, Academy of Leisure
Sciences

P.S. Your donation will pave the way for a new generation of scholars.

P.P.S. Your donation of \$50 or more will help us meet our goal of sending six students to

Salt Lake City, Utah in October!!!

"The opportunity to participate in the Future Scholars program had profound short and long term impacts on me, both personally and professionally. At the NRPA conference in Baltimore, the literature

*Ingrid Schneider, Ph.D.--Clemson University
Assistant Professor, Arizona State University
Future Scholar, 1991*

virtually 'came alive' as I was introduced to and befriended by the premier researchers in the field. This alone made the experience life-changing and memorable for me. The Future Scholars experience encouraged me to pursue the doctoral work that led to my current academic position which I enjoy immensely. Several years after the experience, my group membership with the Future Scholars provides a sense of pride and responsibility for the next generation. Since my participation in the program, I have developed long-term personal relationships with other participants and sponsors. Ultimately, the Future Scholars program led me toward an academic life I embrace and a professional and personal network that enhances my everyday life."

*Erik Rosegard, Ph.D.--University of Utah
Currently travelling in Europe
Future Scholar, 1992*

"Receiving a Future Scholars Award in 1992 provided me with an opportunity to meet and interact with the leading scholars and professionals of our field--what an experience! I was able to: discuss leisure with the authors referenced in my research

papers; have lunch with members of the Academy of Leisure Sciences and the Society of Park and Recreation Educators; attend educational sessions and the research symposium; and engage in stimulating conversations with fellow students. Attending the last five NRPA Conferences has been rewarding and has reaffirmed my interest in higher education--thank you for providing me with an invaluable experience."

Yes, I want to help SPRE and ALS continue the Future Scholars Program.

\$35 \$50 \$75 \$100 Other _____

Please make your checks payable to: The Academy of Leisure Sciences with a notation that this donation is for the Future Scholars program. Please return this card and your check in the envelope provided. Thank you for your support!

All donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowable by law.