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A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
IN TOURISM AND LEISURE INDUSTRIES

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ABSTRACT

The growth of tourism and its contributions to state and local economies and state and local treasuries has spurred an interest in its growth and development among public and private agencies. Tourism in New Jersey and other states is no longer a one-season business. It is a complex industry that provides jobs for seasonal, unskilled workers and professionals in a variety of occupations. This steadily expanding labor pool provides stability in changing economic conditions and during transitional phases in state economies. As tourism continues to gain importance, opportunities for professionals in the areas of planning and development will also increase. Today's professional needs solid training in recreation and leisure services and a thorough knowledge of communication techniques to succeed in this challenging, exciting field.

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There was a time not long ago in New Jersey when tourism provided a few hundred jobs each summer for high school and college students who braved the heat of the sun or the heat of a hamburger grill to earn a few hundred dollars and a suntan between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

Tourism at that time was viewed by most people as something that happened every summer, something as natural as the change of seasons.

Those days are behind us in New Jersey and most other states. The role of tourism and leisure activities has gained importance in our society and the contributions of the tourism industry to state economies and state tax coffers have steadily increased. For that reason, tourism is not something that simply happens any more. It is an important industry whose size and success are the result of effective planning and aggressive development programs.

In New Jersey, as in the nation, tourism is the largest provider of jobs and the second largest industry overall. It provides 300,000 jobs and contributes an estimated \$10 billion to our state economy.

The traditional jobs at beaches and boardwalk stands along the New Jersey Shore and at our lakefront resorts still provide seasonal employment for students and unskilled workers, but the opening of casino hotels and the establishment of the Garden State as a year-round vacation destination have opened the doors of the tourism industry to hundreds of accountants, planners, advertising and public relations executives and experts in a variety of fields including recreation, historical site management and preservation, planning and development.

These are not summer jobs or seasonal positions subject to the whim of the weather or changing economic conditions. These are permanent positions in a growing economy.

As New Jersey changes from an economy based on manufacturing to one that is service oriented, the jobs provided by the tourism industry furnish a stable, expanding labor pool for professional workers, as well as skilled and unskilled employees.

The most dramatic developments in New Jersey tourism have come in Atlantic City since the advent of casino gambling. The contributions of the casino hotels to the state and local economies are a good example of the revenues one segment of the tourism industry generates in New Jersey.

As of June, 1983, the casino hotels employed 31,284 people and construction jobs in the Atlantic City area accounted for an additional 4,000 jobs.

Since 1978, the casinos have paid more than \$382 million to the New Jersey treasury in the form of an eight percent tax on casino winnings. These funds are used to support programs for senior citizens and the handicapped.

The casino hotels also pay more than 50 percent of the property taxes collected by the City of Atlantic City. In 1982, the hotels, with an assessed valuation of more than \$895 million, paid more than \$40 million in property taxes.

Atlantic City's growth as a tourist destination has had a positive effect beyond the city limits. Interest among tourists and developers in adjacent regions of the New Jersey Shore has kept pace with the increase in the number of visitors to the "Queen of Resorts."

Not every state can build its tourism program around a casino resort like Atlantic City. Many states have discovered, however, that the creation of a significant, popular tourist attraction can spur similar, positive effects.

For this reason, opportunities for employment in tourism planning and development will continue to increase in the future.

And, as the tourism industry has changed from a seasonal industry to a year-round business, so too the demands on tourism professionals have also changed.

Today's planning and development professional can no longer be content with the knowledge of his state's attractions and a list of tour operators.

With more and more states discovering the value of a sound tourism program, the competition for tourist dollars among states has intensified. Many states have also vested their tourism departments with the responsibility of building and promoting their state's image while they work to attract more tourists.

It is not easy to map out a course of study to prepare young professionals for the challenges of this field. Academic training in recreation and leisure services is an important credential for prospective employees in tourism planning and development, but a broad background that emphasizes communication arts and techniques is, perhaps, the best preparation.

Because of the intense competition for tourist dollars and the continuing association between tourism and image-building campaigns, professionals in the fields of planning and development must be familiar with advertising and public relations programs and techniques.

The success of these campaigns is often determined by the support of the tourism industry on the state level. The interpersonal skills used by tourism professionals to develop that relationship and articulate, well-informed presentations to keep industry members informed will earn that support.

Equally important to tourism planning and development today is a thorough knowledge of your clients, their number, income level and point of origin. Today's professional must be able to analyze statistical information and use it to plan the future.

Because tourism and other leisure activities will continue to gain importance in our society and to contribute more to state and local economies, opportunities for professionals in planning and development can also be expected to grow.

Tourism has increased in size and complexity in recent years in New Jersey and in the nation. It has grown from a one-season business to a year-round industry that provides a steady source of revenue for government and a steady pool of private sector jobs. It has become the nation's second-largest industry and the future for those who pursue careers in this exciting, challenging field can only be bright.