

## **Strategies used by the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management to Embed Concepts of Sustainable Development in the Curriculum of both Undergraduate and Graduate Students**

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### ABSTRACT

The origins of the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) at the University of Massachusetts Amherst go back to 1938 making it one of oldest hospitality and tourism programs in the country. Since its inception, the department has evolved to accommodate the changing nature of its industries and to best prepare students for careers in their chosen fields. Today with approximately 500 students in its undergraduate and graduate curricula, the program is among the most respected in the world earning a fourth place ranking in the 1996 *Gourman Report : A Rating of Undergraduate Degree Programs in American and International Universities*.

Its mission, "to teach, advance, and support the practice and management of the hospitality and tourism industries" reflects and addresses the needs of its multiple constituencies:

1. Educating students at the undergraduate and graduate levels so they can succeed as professionals capable of providing innovative leadership in changing environments;
2. Advancing the state of knowledge in the industries through original and adaptive research and scholarship;
3. Serving the industries through programs on and off campus that are designed to advance and renew the education of those practicing in the fields; and
4. Supporting the University of Massachusetts by participating in its governing bodies and serving the state public at large.

The department's international ranking is an indicator of its ability to successfully serve multiple constituencies while simultaneously adhering to the more traditional roles of teaching, research, and service. In addition, the Hospitality and Tourism Management Department is keenly aware of the role of its industries in the economic health of communities, states, nations, and the world. In order to prepare its graduates to become successful leaders and managers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the curricular goals of the department are outcome based and are built on the premise that successful leaders and managers must be able to communicate effectively, solve problems, think creatively, act strategically, and remain aware of the impact that our hospitality and tourism industries have on the economy and in sustainable community development.

While knowledge and theory are essential to the academic experience, so too are community-based and problem-based learning experiences that afford students the

opportunity to apply the knowledge they have learned in a "real world" environment. In our experience, participatory research in a community-based learning environment is the ideal way for students to assess their own ability to communicate effectively, solve problems, think creatively, act strategically, and remain aware of the social, cultural, environmental, and economic impacts of the hospitality and tourism industries.

### **Case Studies**

Strategies used by the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management to embed concepts of sustainable development in the curriculum are best described in a case format. Three participatory research based projects that occurred between 2000 and 2003 form the basis for this case. More specifically, the case focuses on three key areas that apply to each of the research projects. These include: designing a community-based research framework that grows from the needs of a community; conducting the research within courses that utilized student-centered, problem-based, teaching and learning; and assessing the effectiveness of the projects in terms of both student learning competencies as well as sustainable community development.

### **Key words:**

Community-Based Learning, Competency-Based Curriculum, Participatory Research, Sustainable Community Development