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Hospitality Administration Program Administrators View Core Areas of Knowledge

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Abstract

In 1992 the Accrediting Commission on Programs of Hospitality Administration established standards for hospitality administration programs. The authors surveyed program administrators regarding the current and preferred location for the teaching of the common core areas of hospitality administration knowledge.

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In 1992 the Accrediting Commission on Programs of Hospitality Administration established standards for hospitality administration programs. The authors surveyed program administrators regarding the current and preferred location for the teaching of the common core areas of hospitality administration knowledge.

Improvement of the academic field of study, or protection of the credibility and value of degrees granted, are common concerns of both academicians and practitioner regarding their field. This concern intensifies when a field of study is still developing or there is a rapid increase in the number of programs offering degrees. The rapid growth in the number of hospitality administration programs raises questions regarding the effect of expansion on the quality and credibility of the programs and field of study.[1] Research focusing on factors and characteristics of hospitality administration programs is a product of the effort to improve and stabilize the field of study and its programs.

Part of the maturation process for hospitality administration as a field of study was the dialogue regarding specialized accreditation for hospitality administration programs in the professional literature and by the members of the Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education in the early 1980s.[2] This dialogue lead to the establishment of the Accreditation Commission for Programs in Hospitality Administration (ACPHA) in 1989 and the development of standards for the accrediting process.

The 1992 ACPHA *Self-Study Guide* delineated, for purposes of specialized accreditation, standards for hospitality administration programs. Included in the 1992 ACPHA *Self-Study Guide* were standards for nine program characteristics: mission and objectives; evaluation and planning; administration and governance; curriculum; faculty/

instructional staff; student services and activities; physical resources; financial resources; library and learning resources. The common core of knowledge for a hospitality administration program is ACPHA standard 3b, defined as knowledge and understanding of the general principles of the following areas, and specific applications in hospitality management:

• historical overview of the hospitality industry and the profession
• the marketing of hospitality goods and services
• the operations relative to the provision of hospitality goods and/or services, including food service management and/or lodging management and related services
  • accounting procedures/practices
  • financial management
  • the economic environment of profit and non-profit organizations
  • the legal environment of profit and non-profit organizations
  • ethical considerations and sociopolitical influences affecting organizations
  • quantitative methods and management information systems, including computer applications
  • the planning for and utilization and management of personnel, including the improvement of student understanding of human behavior
  • organization theory, behavior, and interpersonal communication
  • administrative processes, including the integration of analysis and policy determination at the overall management level
  • provision of sufficient areas of specialization to allow students to develop individual interests and talents[3]

The intent of the research was the investigation of the location in institutions where these 13 common core areas of hospitality administration knowledge established by the ACPHA are taught and where administrators prefer they be taught.

Program Administrators Are Surveyed

The population studied was the hospitality administration program administrators for four-year degree granting hospitality administration programs in the United States. A program administrator was defined as the individual who was responsible for the administration, direction, and coordination of the overall hospitality administration program in the institution.

To ensure that all programs in the United States were included, *A Guide to College Programs in Hospitality and Tourism 1992-1993*[4] and *Peterson's Guide to Four-Year Colleges*[5] were used to determine the programs and administrators to be surveyed; 207 programs, including both public and private, profit and non-profit, were identified as four year degree granting hospitality administration programs. Twenty-six of the returned surveys indicated there was no hospitality administra-

tion program at the institution. Institutions for each of the 26 respondents indicating no hospitality administration program were eliminated from the study's population, reducing the number to 181. A total of 128 surveys indicating a hospitality administration program were returned for a response rate of 70 percent.

The administrators were asked to select the current primary location and the preferred primary location for each of the core areas of knowledge from the following possible categories:

- **separate/within unit:** separate course(s) only offered in the hospitality administration academic unit
- **integrated/within unit:** integrated into one or more courses offered in the hospitality administration program academic unit
- **separate/outside unit:** separate course(s) only offered in another academic unit or other academic units other than the hospitality administration academic unit
- **integrated/outside unit:** integrated into one or more courses offered in another academic unit or other academic units other than the hospitality administration academic unit
- **not taught:** the subject matter for the area of knowledge is not taught

All data analysis was conducted using SPSS^{pc}-Windows, Release 5. The five categories for current and preferred location utilized in the questionnaire yielded a high number of low cell frequencies requiring recoding into three categories of "within unit," "outside unit," and "not taught." The data were analyzed utilizing frequency of response for determination of agreement among administrators regarding the location where the core areas of knowledge were and should be taught. Determination of agreement through the analysis of frequency of response is based on the percentage point difference between categories of response. The greatest possible difference is 100 percent (a = 100 percent and b =0 percent) and the smallest possible difference is zero percent (a = 50 percent and b = 50 percent). Weisberg and Bowen state "a 60 percent difference would be enormous, and most researchers would consider a 30 percent difference large."[6] For this study a 40 percent difference was considered an indicator of agreement among respondents.

There was agreement among programs in the United States regarding the current primary location for the teaching of the following six of the 13 core areas of knowledge (see Table 1): "historical overview of the hospitality industry and profession," "operations relative to the provision of hospitality goods and/or services, including food service management and/or lodging management and related services," "marketing of hospitality goods and services," "financial management of hospitality goods and services," "administrative processes, including integration of analysis and policy determination at the overall management level," and "provision of sufficient areas of specialization to

Table 1
Current Primary Location

Core Area of Knowledge	N	W/U	O/U	NT
Historical overview of the hospitality industry and the profession	128	92.8%	4.0%	3.2%
Operations relative to the provision of hospitality goods and/or services, including foodservice management and/or lodging management and related services	121	94.2%	2.5%	3.3%
Marketing of hospitality goods and services	120	80.8%	15.8%	3.3%
Accounting procedures/practices	110	45.5%	52.7%	1.8%
Economic environment of profit and non-profit organizations	120	34.2%	56.7%	9.2%
Financial management of hospitality goods and services	117	76.1%	16.2%	7.7%
Ethical considerations and sociopolitical influences affecting organizations	112	62.5%	26.8%	10.7%
Legal environment of profit and non-profit organizations	116	60.3%	31.9%	7.8%
Quantitative methods information , systems including and management computer applications	104	49.0%	49.0%	1.9%
Planning for and utilization and management of personnel, including the improvement of student understanding of human behavior	110	60.0%	37.3%	2.7%
Organizational theory, behavior, and interpersonal communication	106	48.1%	50.0%	1.9%
Administrative processes, including integration of analysis and policy determination at the overall management level	113	68.1%	27.4%	4.4%
Provision of sufficient areas of specialization to allow students to develop individual interests and talents	115	73.9%	11.3%	14.8%

Note: "Within Unit" (W/U), "Outside Unit" (O/U), and "Not Taught" (NT). Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding

allow students to develop individual interests and talents." These six core areas of knowledge, with the possible exception of marketing, comprise those concentrations of information perceived by most hospitality administrators to be particularly specific to hospitality administration as a field of study. This was evident in the fact that all but marketing were taught within the hospitality management department.

Survey Shows Lack of Standardization

The remaining eight core areas of knowledge for which there did administrators preferred to have taught within the hospitality management department, "planning for and utilization and management of personnel, including the improvement of student understanding of human behavior," was concerned with personnel management and human resource issues.

It is possible that agreement among administrators regarding the preferred location for the teaching of the core area of knowledge "planning for and utilization and management of personnel, including the improvement of student understanding of human behavior" is a further refinement of administrators' concepts of what should comprise the specialized subject matter for hospitality administration as a field of study. The consistent appearance of this core area of knowledge as significant may indicate an increase in the perceived importance of the area of personnel and human resource knowledge in the hospitality administration curriculum. The remaining six core areas of knowledge among which there was not agreement regarding the preferred primary location for teaching indicate, however, a continuance of the lack of standardization, and /or a feeling that these courses are general in nature and are not unique to hospitality management curricula across the United States.

This research found there was not universal agreement regarding both the current and preferred primary location for the teaching of the 13 core areas of knowledge established by the ACPHA standards. The

Table 2
Administrators' Preferred Primary Location

Core Area of Knowledge	N	W/U	O/U	NT
Historical overview of the hospitality and the profession	105	96.2%	2.9%	1.0%
Operations relative to the provision of hospitality goods and/or services, including foodservice management and/or lodging management and related services	103	96.1%	1.9%	1.9%
Marketing of hospitality goods and services	97	89.7%	9.3%	1.0%
Accounting procedures/practices	96	54.2%	45.8%	0.0%
Economic environment of profit and non-profit organizations	100	38.0%	58.0%	4.0%
Financial management of hospitality goods and services	98	88.8%	9.2%	2.0%
Ethical considerations and sociopolitical influences affecting organizations	95	67.4%	31.6%	1.1%
Legal environment of profit and organizations	97	66.0%	33.0%	1.0%
Quantitative methods information systems, including and management computer applications	91	57.1%	42.9%	0.0%
Planning for and utilization and management of personnel, including the improvement of student understanding of human behavior	93	74.2%	24.7%	1.1%
Organizational theory, behavior, and interpersonal communication	93	49.5%	48.4%	2.2%
Administrative processes, including integration of analysis and policy determination at the overall management level	99	73.7%	24.2%	2.0%
Provision of sufficient areas of specialization to allow students to develop individual interests and talents	93	86.0%	9.7%	4.3%

Note: "Within Unit" (W/U), "Outside Unit" (O/U), and "Not Taught" (NT). Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding

preeminence of the response "within unit" for those areas of knowledge among which significant agreement appeared should be investigated further. A relationship may exist between location and the importance of, or a perceived need for, content control of courses associated with an area of knowledge within a hospitality administration program.

Further investigation of the core area of knowledge "planning and utilization and management of personnel, including the improvement of student understanding of human behavior" is recommended to determine its position in the body of knowledge for hospitality management as a field of study. Currently agreement does not exist among programs regarding the location for teaching of this area of knowledge. The 50 percent difference between the "within unit" and "outside unit" preferred teaching location, however, indicated agreement among administrators regarding the preferred teaching location for this area of knowledge.

Hospitality administration programs in the United States current-ly are located within a variety of academic colleges and schools, as well as varying from a program within an academic department to being an independent college or school. This diversity of academic location and structure results in curriculum control ranging from minimal to absolute. Future research on the effect of the unit location and the teaching location of the core areas of knowledge is recommended to investigate the importance of location to content and quality.

Body of Knowledge Continues to Evolve

Hospitality administration as a field of study is still maturing and the body of knowledge which comprises the field of study is continuing to evolve. The ACPHA 13 core areas of knowledge have established a defacto body of knowledge for programs in hospitality administration. This body of knowledge as with any programmatic body of knowledge, includes both supporting and field specific subject matter. The results of this study give a strong indication of what currently constitutes the field specific subject matter for hospitality management as a field of study and what will be the next area of expansaion of the field specific subject matter as the field of study continues to mature and evolve.

The agreement among the programs in the United States regard-ing the teaching of the history of the industry, operations, marketing, financical management, administration, and specialized areas within hospitality administration can be accepted as validation of the current field specific subject matter. As the field of study matures and expands, the administrators have strongly indicated the subject matter perti-nent to personnel management and human behavior should be added to the field specific subject matter. The remaining subject matter in the areas of accounting, economics, ethics, law, information systems, and organizational theory and behavior were validated as supporting the field specific subject matter.

While the ACPHA core areas of knowledge can be perceived as a valid representation of the body of knowledge for a hospitality admin-

istration program at the time of this study; investigation of the manner in which standard 3b is addressed by programs, particularly with regard to the instructional location is warranted. Additional consideration is needed of the location factor as an indicator of programmatic quality and content control. Additionally, continued monitoring of evolution of the field of study is required to ensure the standards established are reflective of its maturation.

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