Approach to Tourism Education in U.S.
Texas A&M University

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Officials of tourism, travel and education in Mexico; ladies and gentlemen. I am pleased to have this opportunity to describe our programs of tourism education at Texas A&M University. In addition to my brief comments, I have brought descriptive literature that contains more detailed information on these programs.

As compared to the other members of the United States delegate today, our program represents a different approach. Instead of duplicating the fine programs in hotel management in our country, we have established a broad program that meets a market for students who are versed in resource development as related to tourism. We work at the level of full university research, teaching and extension in the field of recreation, tourism and resources development.

Nearly all of our faculty of approximately 20 do both teaching and research. Three faculty work in extension. This means that we have a strong commitment to research and high level education. Our program does not provide vocational training. In Texas we have community colleges and other institutions providing this service.

Our faculty and our breadth of interest is multidisciplinary. Individual faculty members are from a variety of disciplines: economics, planning, landscape architecture, geography, forestry, recreation, law, sociology. Therefore, our teaching and research relates to topics such as market analysis, marine and coastal recreation, geographic and spatial distribution, park-recreation
resource use, interpretation, planning, recreation behavior, policy, and wilderness recreation. All of these are important elements of tourism and are brought into our several courses in tourism.

We see tourism as a system, a dynamic system. We observe that transportation, lodging, food service and promotion for tourism are means to an end—the end of personal satisfaction from an experience by travelers. That experience is place-oriented and therefore the field of resource development for tourism becomes very important. Tourism is highly dependent upon the allocation of resources, planning and management of cultural and natural resources. This is our field of emphasis.

Therefore, we work closely with the many federal, state and community agencies and organizations that are involved with resource development. Some examples: United States Forest Service, National Park Service, Corps of Engineers, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Reclamation, Heritage, Conservation and Recreation Service. Some 85 percent of all outdoor recreation in the United States takes place on federally owned and managed land. Therefore, both our research and teaching relate to these with focus on tourism development. But, in addition, we also work with the private sector—non-profit organizations and private enterprise. Their role in tourism resource development is a large one.

Generally, our graduates are now working in three broad categories of interest. Many now work with agencies, such as those named above, both at the state and federal level. An increasing number is finding employment in private enterprise: theme parks, vacation home complexes, travel agencies and chambers of commerce. A third category is that of university teaching.

Our undergraduate program is one of basic park, recreation and resource development and management. We have about 200 students enrolled in this program each year. The literature describes the several courses that are
offered and also the breadth of the program. We have two courses that specifically relate to private enterprise and tourism principles.

In our graduate program, we have three masters degrees and a Ph.D. degree. About 80 students are enrolled in these programs each year. One non-thesis masters degree is in natural resources development and is offered jointly with other resource disciplines. A popular professional masters degree in our field is that in recreation and resources development. The masters of science degree requiring a thesis, is offered in recreation and resources development. In all of these a student is offered a wide selection of specialized fields, including tourism.

The Ph.D. degree is in recreation and resources development. It requires a dissertation based upon original research. Several graduates of this program are now teaching in universities or are affiliated with tourism and recreation agencies in high level positions. Special courses in tourism are an integral part of a student's tourism option.

All faculty have some responsibility in continuing education. The extension staff carries out educational programs directed to the field in both the private and the public sector. This is done through publications as well as field and campus meetings.

Based upon the success of our graduates, we are convinced that there is a place for educated people in resources development with a specialty in tourism. Expansion of this type of education should assure protection and development of natural and cultural resources, so very important to tourism everywhere.

Our interest and work at the international level has recently been strengthened by the establishment of the Office of International Affairs, directed by a newly appointed vice president at Texas A&M University. In addition to coordinating the activities of over 1,000 international students
(76 from Mexico) this office is responsible for many research and development
programs outside the United States.

I shall be pleased to entertain any questions and provide additional
information on our program and Texas A&M University.