The spring 2003 Seminar offered an opportunity to interact with professionals working in the field of parks, recreation, and tourism in a variety of areas. While many of these professionals were from outside of the department, a number of presenters represented the work that is taking place at Michigan State University. This paper will focus on the various themes that were presented that will have an impact on future decisions to be made when entering the field.

The messages that many of the speakers conveyed provide for a number of benefits to students pursuing careers in any aspect of parks, recreation, and tourism. The projects that many of these professionals are currently, or have previously been a part of, provide examples of the many issues and possibilities that future professionals will need to understand and contend with. The issues include management decisions, research foci, education, career opportunities, and team building.

With regard to the issue of management decisions, the insight of the presenters that actually contend with these decisions in the field provides for the students to understand how the concepts that are taught in school actually relate to the real world experience that many are going to encounter in the very near future. Speakers such as Phil Porter, Ann Mayo-Kiely, and Dick Shafer were valuable in presenting issues facing managers in the field. These professionals not only focused on management, but also how research assists in this process.

The presentation of how research assists with management offers a link between the work that is done within the university setting and the professional world. Along with this aspect of
the seminar, many other presenters discussed current and previous research efforts that help to shape the field. Many of these speakers actually came from the department and the university itself. Some examples of these presenters include Dr. Holecek, Dr. Vogt, Adi Susilo, Dayle Jackson, Kathy Perales, Lori Martin, Dr. Leefer, and John Warbach. The presentations by these individuals provide students with ideas for future research as well as highlight areas that future professionals need to consider once in the field. The combination of the management perspective and the research perspective provide the students with an understanding of how their education can, and in some instances must, be applied. The speakers also illustrated the career opportunities that an education in parks, recreation, and tourism can provide. These presentations not only offer information about what will be needed when entering the field, but also offer some information about methods to assist a professional actively working in the field.

An example of a presentation that offered information to assist working professionals is the team building exercises presented by Dr. Peterson. This seminar offered methods for building trust in team setting. Many of the projects that a professional in the field will deal with will involve good communication and teamwork. By being able to identify what factors contribute to, or inhibit, this process a professional will be better equipped to conduct activities in a more efficient manner. This presentation combined with all of the others that provided personal anecdotes from working professionals is extremely useful for understanding how work actually gets accomplished.

The understanding of how work gets accomplished will be extremely valuable to remember when pursuing a career. This combined with the presented management issues, research areas, and opportunities provide for clarity in understanding how the scholastic endeavors that students are pursuing will ultimately tie into the professional pursuits that lie
ahead. The speakers were effective at presenting these ideas, and now it is important for the students to carry these messages over to the remainder of their scholastic careers as well as into the beginnings of their professional careers. The messages provide a strong base from which good decisions can be made.