

# IIRSA STU:



# STUDENT TECHNOLOGY UPDATE



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Hello IIRSA Students and Professionals!

I hope that everyone had a wonderful spring break and that you've safely returned to your college campuses and didn't miss a beat getting back into the swing of things. There have been a lot of different things going on throughout the state, region, and nation as students and professionals gear up for the National Conference in Charlotte, NC next week! If you're planning on heading down to the conference this year, I look forward to seeing you down south for four days of networking, educationals, and an all around good time!

Throughout this edition of the IIRSA STU, we've got a lot of topics to talk about. If you're looking to get involved more at the state level this year, I encourage you to check out the section about standing for Illinois Student State Representative. Applications are due to the incoming State Director, Lynne Thompson-Cundiff by April 30. Should you have any questions about the process or the responsibilities of the Illinois Student State Representative, feel free to ask either me or Lynne- we are both more than willing to help answer any questions that you may have!

Also, be sure to take the time to get to know some of our students in IIRSA that are taking on new leadership positions. We now have an editor of the IIRSA STU, Matt Graifer from SIU-E and we also have three students from Illinois running for positions on the Student Leadership Team for 2009-2010! Lizette Ruiz (DePaul University) and Ashlea Wilson (Northern Illinois University) are both slated as candidates for Region III Student Representative while I have been slated for National Student Representative. I think that the willingness of students in our state goes to show the level of professionalism that we value within our state association and we should be very proud of all of our emerging student leaders! Enjoy the issue and I hope to see you in Charlotte!

Courtney  
[CE-James@wiu.edu](mailto:CE-James@wiu.edu)

## So I'm Going to NIRSA! What Should I Expect There?

If this is the first time that you're going to be attending the national conference, get excited! The NIRSA Conference is full of exciting opportunities to network with peers, meet campus recreation professionals throughout the nation, most most importantly, have a good time while learning about the field, programs, and other initiatives going on throughout the country. Before I attended my first conference, I know I had a few questions about what to expect, what to do when I got there, and of course, what to wear. I've tried to cover the basics, but if you have any questions about the conference or what it entails, feel free to contact me at [CE-James@wiu.edu](mailto:CE-James@wiu.edu) or ask a professional at your institution.

*What can I expect when I get there?* The NIRSA National Conference is four days of sessions, socials, and exhibit halls that really give you the opportunity to learn about the field and meet new people around the association. Take the time to get to know new individuals and go to sessions that may not necessarily be within your comfort zone. Who knows, you may learn something new to apply to your institution.

*Do I need to bring anything special to the conference?* In the past during registration, we have received a bag to carry around for the week with a pen, pad of paper, and other goodies to get you through the week. If you have business cards, bring a few and carry them around with you in case someone asks you for your contact information. One of the cool things that happens at the conference is a t-shirt exchange, so if you have the ability to, bring a few shirts from your school to trade with people throughout the country.

*What should I wear while I'm down there?* Remember, you are at a professional conference. Although you may not be looking for a job this year, you very well may be making your first impression on a potential future employer. Generally speaking, dress is business casual. While attending sessions during the day, you'll see a lot of people in polos and khakis and will see people more relaxed at night during the socials.

### Getting 2 for the Price of 1: The NIRSA Foundation Initiative Ashley Donaldson, Region III Student Representative, Indiana University

At this year's upcoming conference, there's going to be more new things that just amazing topics, unbelievable speakers, and an amazing showcase. The NIRSA Foundation is also creating a new donation initiative to benefit the students of NIRSA in terms of scholarships. The Foundation is supporting a 2 for 1 donation initiative, which asks students to donate money and a sponsor will then match the donations 2 for 1 up to \$10,000. The Student Leadership Team has decided to support this initiative and we are taking every measure to get the word out. We are not asking for large donations- we are asking for anything that students can give \$1, \$5, \$10. Every little big counts, so if you're able to, please give what you can.

The big question is - why should students donate money? The money that we raise will go into an endowment fund that helps to support the Career Opportunities Center as well as the NIRSA Foundation Scholarships. Many students have been able to secure graduate assistantships and professional positions by utilizing the COC or may have been able to attend the National Conference because of a NIRSA Foundation Scholarship. By donating what we can, we are showing our support to the NIRSA Foundation, which has continually shown great support to us as student members. The best part about an endowment fund is that the money remains there forever, so students for many years to come will benefit from our efforts.

Ideally, the SLT would like to reach the maximum of \$5000 that would then be matched by the donor (\$10,000) and would form a grand total of \$15,000. We realize this may seem like a lofty goal, but if you break it down it really is just a little from everyone. We currently have 1000 student members and to reach the \$5000, each person would need to donate \$5. This goal is possible, but we need your help! If you have any questions about the initiative, feel free to contact me at [donaldsa@indiana.edu](mailto:donaldsa@indiana.edu) or come and find me at the Conference. Again, we couldn't do this without you and we appreciate your help to see to the continued success of the NIRSA Foundation!

## Preparing For Interviews - Are You Really Prepared? Brian Cousins, IIRSA State Director

As some of you prepare for interviews for graduate assistantships and/or professional positions, I thought I might offer a few thoughts. One of the most important things to remember when going into an interview is the fact that you are “selling” YOURSELF to the interviewer, whether it is an individual or a committee. You want the interviewer to want to hire you because of who you are, not because who you are pretending to be. So be yourself! HOWEVER, you still must remember what you are here for and who you are talking to. You do not want to portray someone you cannot be every day, but you do not want any of your “bad habits” to be on display either. Be yourself but be smart about it! This is a future employer you are talking to so you want all your positive characteristics and traits to be on display.

Be prepared – Think about some of the challenging topics and questions interviewers may present and ask about, and have a prepared idea (but not a scripted answer) as to how you are going to approach the question.

Look the part – A big part of who you are, or at least who others see, is how you look. Dress nice, don’t look like you just got out of bed, and definitely don’t look (or smell) like you were out until 3am the previous night.

Interviews are continuous – Even though your actual interview may only last 30 minutes or an hour during a pre-determined appointment, don’t think the interview starts and/or ends there. Prospective employers are always watching, listening and talking to others who may know you or have worked with you. Always be conscious of your behavior. There is nothing wrong with having fun, but be smart and make smart decisions!

Stress your management experience – No matter what type of position you may be applying for in recreational sports, almost all employers want to see some managerial/supervisory experience. Make sure you highlight this experience in your interview. If there is not a specific question asked, make sure you stress this experience when given an opportunity to add anything about yourself.

Have Fun! – I don’t think anyone goes into an interview without some sense of nervousness, and it’s ok to be a little nervous. However, don’t let your nerves consume you. Relax and take a couple of deep breaths. You are applying for a position in Campus Recreation and this should be a fun learning experience. Keep telling yourself how good you are going to do in the interview and lean on your friends and colleagues for support and encouragement.

GOOD LUCK and please let me know if there is anything I can do to help you in your search!

Should you have any questions, feel free to contact me at the conference or via e-mail before hand at [bcuz@vcsa.uic.edu](mailto:bcuz@vcsa.uic.edu). See you in Charlotte!

## The Internship of a Lifetime

Alex Backes, NIRSA National Center Intern

Whitewater rafting trips. Preconference workshops. Hotels. Educational sessions. Transportation. Race shop tours. NBA games. Hotels. YMCA passes. Game shows. Socials. More hotels! When I arrived on January 1 after a 30-hour drive from Iowa to beautiful Corvallis, Oregon, to begin my internship at the NIRSA National Center (NNC), I had no idea I'd be involved in so many projects and activities related to the preparation of this year's Annual Conference in Charlotte (and sometimes all of these projects in just one morning!). The NNC staff had lovingly told me I'd be getting the "internship of a lifetime," and they were 100% correct.

As a student member I've attended two previous conferences in Minneapolis and Austin and was amazed at how smooth everything runs. I've learned that this is no accident; our well-run Annual Conference is the result of the tireless efforts of the staff at the NIRSA National Center and our volunteer association leaders. Every bus providing transportation, every piece of food set out, every educational session and preconference trip, and every booth set up at the expo has a name and a face behind it that made it happen. It's been my pleasure to be a part of that preparation and I'm excited to see our work come together at this year's conference. Some people stress out about having 20 relatives over for a Christmas dinner. Try planning a week-long conference for 2,000 colleagues with high expectations!

While the Annual Conference has taken up a great deal of time, it's certainly not the only event I've worked on here. I've been able to attend all NIRSA, NIRSA Foundation, and NIRSA Services Corporation board meetings. These have given me an incredible insight in how NIRSA operates as an organization and they have helped me understand that we have a great number of talented volunteer leaders working to make this organization successful. I also organized a CPR recertification clinic for the National Center staff and will be attending this year's volleyball championships in Kansas City. Every day (and sometimes every 10 minutes!) has brought new projects and challenges. The time has flown by and I can't believe I'll be done in just a few weeks.

One of my last projects as the National Center Intern is to help recruit the next person to take my place. While the specific projects given to the intern change yearly based on the needs of the National Center and the abilities of the intern, please know you'll be given high-level projects and consulted with on important association matters. If you'll be at the Annual Conference in Charlotte and would like to learn more about the National Center internship, please attend an information session on Friday, April 3, from 12:30-1:30 in Room 207 ABCD of the Charlotte Convention Center. NIRSA will be accepting resumes for this position at the Career Opportunities Center. If you have any questions before then, please contact Mary Callender ([Mary@nirsa.org](mailto:Mary@nirsa.org)) or myself, Alex Backes ([intern@nirsa.org](mailto:intern@nirsa.org)) by e-mail or by phone at (541) 766-8211. Corvallis is a beautiful city to live in and this internship just might be "the internship of a lifetime" for you, too!



**Be sure to meet Alex at the National Conference next week!**

### I've Been Thinking About Applying for Illinois Student State Representative...What Exactly Do You Do?

Have you considered applying for the IIRSA Student State Representative position? If you have, that's great! If you haven't, why haven't you? This position is a year-long commitment in which you are given the opportunity to create publications (such as this STU), network professionals and students throughout the state, coordinate campus contacts, and present at the IIRSA State Workshop. The beauty of this position, though, is that you really can make of it what you want. Coming in, I was given a few expectations such as the STU and the coordinating of the campus contacts, but other than that, I was given free rein to make the position into the opportunity that I wanted it to be and have enjoyed that autonomy in helping me develop as a professional.

I think that this has been one of the best opportunities that I have had within NIRSA thus far. I've met so many different people and have learned so much throughout my time as Student State Representative. If you're looking to get involved, I would definitely recommend this experience! If you have any questions about it, feel free to drop me an e-mail or come talk to me at the National Conference.

## And Now....A Message from the Incoming IIRSA State Director

Lynne Thompson-Cundiff, Southern Illinois University-Carbondale

Hello and thanks Courtney for this opportunity to introduce myself in the STU! My name is Lynne Thompson-Cundiff and I'm an Assistant Director at SIUC. I've been involved with IIRSA for the last 4 years serving as the Treasurer and am excited to continue to work with our awesome state association as the incoming Director with Scott Vandermoon as our Assistant Director and Cassie White as Treasurer.

One of our goals is to work with Students to get them more involved in our state association. Not to belabor a "fitness" analogy but if its professional development that you're looking for, IIRSA is a terrific opportunity for "specificity" to tweak those talents! So here's your first chance to practice the "overload principle", apply for Student State Rep! All you need to get started is a cover letter, resume and some short answers to the following questions:

1. Provide a description of your leadership experience (within or outside of IIRSA, include any committee assignments)
2. Indicate your understanding of the purpose of IIRSA and how you would communicate that to the students. (200 words maximum)
3. Describe your philosophy of recreation and how this relates to IIRSA. (75 words maximum)
4. Indicate your goals for the student state rep and a statement on how these goals might be achieved by you. (200 words maximum)

Please send your applications by April 30<sup>th</sup> to:

SIUC

Lynne Thompson-Cundiff  
300 E Grand Ave MC 6717  
Carbondale IL 62901

If you will be attending the National Conference next week, I look forward to meeting you there and talking with you about this amazing opportunity! If you will not be attending, please do not let that deter you from applying. We could set up a phone conversation to talk about the position or correspond via e-mail should you have any questions for me. Thanks and please let me know if you have any questions!

Interested in getting involved but think that the Student State Representative position might be too much? Join a IIRSA State Association Committee! The time commitment is much less but the opportunities still exist to network. For more information, contact Lynne at [tlc2@siu.edu](mailto:tlc2@siu.edu).

## Extra! Extra! Read All About It! IIRSA Members Vote on the Renaming of the STU

After its two years of success thus far, the STU has become a great resource for students and professionals alike throughout the state of Illinois. While the newsletter has been celebrated and praised, it has also received some flak for its name. Why you may ask? Well, besides the fact that it's sent out via e-mail, the Student Technology Update really has nothing to do with Technology. So in a stroke of genius, our new editor, Matt, has come up with a few names that could possibly replace the existing STU. So here's the deal...Read these over and send your top three choices ranked to Courtney at [CE-James@wiu.edu](mailto:CE-James@wiu.edu) by April 30<sup>th</sup> and the new name will be featured in her final newsletter of the year. Thanks for taking the time to read them over and provide your input for the renaming of the STU!

- **CREC - ILL** – Campus Recreation in Illinois Ledger
- **(The Big) RIG** – Recreation in Illinois Gazette
- **REC** – RecSports Education Courier
- **CREC Review**
- **The Campus RECord**
- **RSR** - Rec Sports Review
- **IIRSA Bugle**
- **IIRSA Post**

## A Tale of Two States: Making the Big Move from Undergrad to Graduate Assistant Matt Graifer, Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville

Well folks, it's that time of year again. It's March and we, the students and Professionals in the field of Campus Recreation, are gearing up for another exciting NIRSA National Conference this year to be held in Charlotte, NC. For you professionals, it's an opportunity to go out and interview the best of the best for your open GA positions. For you students who are going to be interviewing for those same positions, you are refining your interview skills, dry cleaning your suits, and polishing your shoes so that you can make a good impression during those fateful four days that will undoubtedly have a significant impact on the rest of your professional career. As a GA candidate, you essentially have a small window to make the right impression on hiring committees so that you can serve for two years as a Graduate Assistant in some to-be-named school in some to-be-named state. Sound scary? It is, but it is also one of the most valuable experiences you'll ever have in your professional career and is totally worth all of the trouble that you will undoubtedly go through.

My name is Matt Graifer and I am a first year Grad Assistant at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) and the new Editor of this publication (the soon to be renamed STU). I was born and raised in the most densely populated state in the country, New Jersey (or the "Dirty Jerz" for those of you more familiar with it). I grew up just south of New York City and I did my undergrad at Rowan University, just east of Philadelphia. Just last year, I was in the exact same shoes that you students who are interviewing are in at this very moment. By this time last year, I was in beautiful Daytona Beach, FL for spring break resting up before the mad dash that was the 2008 NIRSA National Conference. I had already sent out my resumes, cover letters, and references to almost 15 schools in a vast array of states and had telephone interviews as soon as I got back, so I would need all of the rest that I could get.

While most of my friends who weren't going through the process that we in the Recreation Profession go through had already applied for graduate programs months before, April came and I still had no idea as to which STATE I would even wind up in! It's a scary thought, but the key to making it work for you is to be flexible and open-minded. That's exactly what I did, and that's how I wound up at SIUE as the Graduate Assistant of Facilities, a position

which I love. The road was a tough one, but the journey was well worth the struggles needed to get here.

So how can a city-boy born and raised in New Jersey adapt to the different, slower-



**A typical day at the office for the STU's new editor**

paced

lifestyle of

the Midwest? The truth is that it really isn't all that difficult. People are people wherever you go, only with slightly different accents. Most people can't believe that I don't talk like Tony Soprano and that I could go from living in NJ to Edwardsville, IL. Although it is different than what I have been used to my entire life, living in IL is a great experience that I wouldn't trade for the world. I work with an amazing staff of people who has taken me in and made me feel welcome from the day they offered me the position, and that is the kind of experience that awaits you at the end of the long and arduous road that lies ahead. As long as you're prepared for what is ahead of you, you will come out on the other side with a great new job opportunity and an experience that will have a huge impact on you for the rest of your life.

Most professionals will tell you that in terms of your own professional development, it is probably best to move somewhere far away for grad school or to at least go to a different school in order to broaden your experiences and make you more marketable when you go looking for that first big professional position upon completion of your graduate studies. That is good advice to follow, especially when you think of your experience as a grad assistant as invaluable and as two years of your life, which really isn't a very long time in the grand scheme of things. Keep an open mind, make sure your resumes and cover letters are perfect, and go through some mock interviews to make sure that you are ready for anything that the many different professionals at NIRSA are going to throw at you. So go out, be flexible, and most importantly HAVE FUN and you'll wind up getting the experience of a lifetime!

## Meet the Candidates Standing for Office from Illinois

This year, IIRSA is proud to say that we have three students standing for positions on the Student Leadership Team. At the national level, Courtney James from Western Illinois University is running for National Student Representative and Lizette Ruiz from DePaul University and Ashlea Wilson from Northern Illinois University are standing for Region III Student Representative. Take the time to read about the candidates below and be sure to vote either at the Conference or by proxy ballot if you are a NIRSA Student Member!

### Lizette Ruiz, Candidate for Region III Student Representative

My name is Lizette Ruiz and I am a first year Facilities Graduate Assistant at the University of Illinois at Chicago. I have recently been slated to stand for office as the Region III Student Representative. I have been involved in Region III for the past two years as a member of the Student Lead On Leadership Team. This experience has introduced me to a great collection of people in Region III and it has given me the opportunity to collaborate with others. I want to take my involvement a step further and gain a different experience by standing for office.

I was considering applying for the Illinois Student Representative but I was encouraged by previous Region I Student Representative Anne MacDonald from DePaul University to apply for the regional position. She told me how her experience of being on the Student Leadership Team was great and how beneficial it was for her. What sealed my decision was attending a presentation at the 2009 Lead On Conference by Ashley Donaldson, Sean Finley, and Courtney James who have all been involved members of NIRSA and have taken on these leadership positions, and they posed the question of, "why not?" Why not get involved? Why not hold an office position? Only good things can come from taking that first step and applying. As a student, I have had great support from professionals and know that they are willing to help me through this process. I have been fortunate enough to have gone through this process and learn from this experience. If you are considering running for office or becoming more involved in NIRSA in the future, ask yourself this question: "why not?"

### Ashlea Wilson, Candidate for Region III Student Representative

The journey to this moment has been great. Being a part of an organization of thinkers and doers helps me grow every day. I started out at the Department of Campus Recreation at the University of Houston as a facility supervisor, and I enjoyed the experience. I joined NIRSA to show my commitment to recreation. I'm now the Graduate Assistant of Open Recreation and Facilities at Northern Illinois University. I am currently working on receiving a master's in Sport Management. I've had the opportunity to attend several conferences since joining NIRSA in 2006 including annual conferences, Student Lead-On, and the National Recreation Facilities Institute.

If selected as the Region III Student Representative, I would increase the diversity in student membership, strengthen professional and student mentorships, engage student members through development opportunities, and encourage students to lead healthy lifestyles. I would actively seek student perspectives to promote student involvement. I would also provide opportunities for students to grow, flourish, and network. I am excited to be slated as a candidate for Region III Student Representative and hope to serve the organization.

### Courtney James, Candidate for National Student Representative

A little over four months ago, I began the process for potentially becoming National Student Representative. I've written articles for newsletters about the process thus far and have had conversations about why it is I am so interested in doing the position, but the one thing that I continuously find myself doing is reflecting on the entire process. For my entire life, I've been a very competitive person. I played every sport I possibly could when I was younger and to this day will still step up for a challenge. When I began this position, though, I truly tried to go at it from a different perspective. In my graduate program, we were talking about getting a job upon completing the program and he told us to take a step back for a second and not worry so much about the final outcome but rather focus on the journey. With that advice in mind, I started on my way to potentially becoming the next NIRSA National Student Rep.

This was an entirely new concept to me and a new way to approach something. However, truly committing to it and taking the competitive nature out of the quest for the position has allowed me to learn so much more about the Association, how it is run, and how we integrate NIRSA's core values into the work that we do. No matter what happens, I'm going to come away from this experience with a strong knowledge base and a once in a lifetime opportunity. Sure my competitive nature still sometimes gets the best of me, but for the most part, I truly have enjoyed the ride.