



Announcing 2025 Best Paper Award Masters Thesis/Special Project Paper

Awardee Receives \$750 Cash Prize and \$500 Travel Stipend to Attend the 2025 NRPA Conference

In support of its research mission, the American Academy for Park & Recreation Administration (AAPRA) hosts an annual research paper competition that alternates between best doctoral dissertation (even numbered years) and best masters thesis/special project paper (odd numbered years).

AAPRA commits to promote, nourish, and embody an inclusive and equitable environment, strengthen our commitment to promote justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, combat systemic and structural racism, and promote a culture of equality for all, through our knowledge advancement, research, education, and scholarly efforts.

Three awards are given:

- One (1) Masters Thesis/Special Project Paper cash award of \$750 and maximum \$500 travel stipend to attend the NRPA 2025 Annual Conference in Orlando, FL, September 16 - 18, and a Masters Thesis/Special Project Paper Certificate. Note: if AAPRA does not hold in-person event at the NRPA Conference or if the selected awardee is unable to attend, the travel stipend will not be provided.
- Two (2) Certificate of Merit awards to two Masters Thesis/Special Project Paper finalists

[Applications](#) open March 20, 2025

2025 Timeline

- March 20:** Masters Thesis/Special Project Paper submissions open; first round is an executive summary of the paper
- June 2:** Submissions close to submit executive summaries of the work (online)
- June 30:** Executive summaries evaluated and three (3) are selected to second round judging
- July 14:** Due date for top three (3) entrants to submit (online) Masters/Special Project Paper
- Aug 18:** Evaluation of three (3) Masters Thesis/Special Project Paper completed; entrants notified; and their academic advisor informed of their selection

- Sept 5:** Selected Masters Thesis/Special Project Paper author submits a 5-minute video summary of their paper which will be uploaded to the AAPRA website
- Sept 17:** Award recipient attends AAPRA General Membership Meeting to present their findings and to attend the AAPRA Award Dinner, Orlando, FL

Dissertation Award Eligibility

1. Open to graduate students in parks, recreation, tourism, or related professions. The submission should contribute to the scholarly literature and have clear implications for the improved practice of park and recreation administration.
2. The submission must have been written as partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Masters degree.
3. The submission must have been completed within the 2024 academic year up to and including Spring 2025.
4. The author of the selected Masters Thesis/Special Project paper must present a 5-minute synopsis of their research finding(s) and its implications for the park and recreation profession to the Academy membership virtually or in person at the AAPRA General Membership Meeting in September.

Criteria

The papers are evaluated using a weighted scoring system with the following criteria:

TOPIC/SUBJECT MATTER APPLICABILITY AND RELEVANCE – 20 points

The subject or topic that was investigated and is being reported should clearly relate to the practice of park and recreation administration in some way. Does the study have implications for/is it applicable to park and recreation administration? Is the subject or topic an issue of concern or interest to park and recreation administration at the present time or in the future? Is the subject or topic relevant and important to today's professional practice in park and recreation administration?

PROBLEM DEVELOPMENT AND STATEMENT – 20 points

The need for the study/problem statement should be clearly articulated and well-situated within the existing literature. Does the study offer new ideas, a creative approach, and questions that relate to the practice of park and recreation administration. The focus of the study, research questions, and/or hypotheses should be evident and directly related to the problem statement.

LITERATURE REVIEW – 10 points

A literature review includes a critical assessment of existing knowledge and research related to the problem under study and demonstrates a solid foundation of knowledge of the topic under investigation. Is the review clearly related to the research topic, exhaustive, current, and comprehensible?

METHODS AND ANALYSES – 20 points

The processes, methods, and analyses used to explore the subject matter should be appropriate to the type of study objectives and/or questions being asked. Are the processes, research/investigative methods, and data analyses applicable to the objectives of the study? Are the processes and methods used to recruit subjects (if applicable) as well as those used to collect and analyze data appropriate to the study hypotheses and/or research questions under

investigation? Methodological quality will be judged within the context of the discipline and type of study utilized.

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS – 20 points

Results must fall within the bounds of the study objectives and selected analysis techniques. Further, conclusions drawn from the findings should be situated within the context of existing knowledge (the literature review). Implications for practice should be clearly articulated and directly applied to park and recreation administration. Is it evident how the information learned supports/enhances/advances the profession?

QUALITY AND CLARITY OF SUBMISSION – 10 points

Composition, grammar, and limited use of jargon are all measures of writing that is clear to a wide audience and of high quality. Is the submission well-organized, understandable to all readers, and does it demonstrate a high level of professional writing competence and coherence?

Entry Procedure

Submit online application by June 2, 2025, along with the appropriate files.

[Applications](#) open March 20, 2025.

1. The cover page should include the title of the Masters/Special Project Paper; entrant's name, current mailing address, e-mail address and phone number; academic advisor's name, e-mail address, and phone number; date on which the submission was completed; and date the degree requirements were completed.
2. The second page should be a one to two paragraph explanation of how the work contributes to the knowledge base related to parks and recreation administration.
3. The executive summary of the paper should not exceed 1000 words. If the summary exceeds one page ONLY the title of Dissertation paper should be in the header (a running head) of each page. No personal identifying information should be included on the title or subsequent pages.

Authors of the three (3) executive summaries that receive the highest ratings by the review committee will be asked to submit a full electronic copy of their Dissertation paper by July 14, 2025. The committee will review each entry, select the Best Paper recipient, and announce the results. Each invited entrant will be notified of the committee decision by August 18, 2025.

Questions? Contact Chris Beth, AAPRA Best Paper Committee Chair; chrisheth13@gmail.com, 650.333.8803.

American Academy for Park & Recreation Administration

To Inspire, Influence and Advance the Park and Recreation Profession

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