



## 2023 Best Paper Award Master's Thesis/Special Project Paper

In support of its research goals, AAPRA hosts an annual research competition that alternates between best master's thesis/special project paper (odd years) and best doctoral dissertation (even years).

Three awards are given:

- One (1) Master's Thesis/Special Project Award of \$750, up to \$500 in travel funds to attend the NRPA 2023 Annual Conference in Dallas, TX, and a Best Paper Award Certificate. Note: if AAPRA does not hold in-person events at the NRPA Conference or if the selected awardee is unable to attend, the travel support will not be provided
- Two (2) Certificate of Merit awards to two Master's Thesis/Special Project Paper finalists

**[Apply Here \(link to Submittable\)](#)**

### 2023 Timeline

- April 18:** Master's Thesis/Special Project Paper nominations open; first round is an executive summary of the paper
- June 16:** Nominations close to submit executive summaries of the work (online)
- July 14:** Executive summaries evaluated and three (3) are selected to second round judging
- July 27:** Due date for top three (3) entrants to submit (online) Master's Thesis/Special Project Paper
- Aug 25:** Evaluation of three (3) Master's Thesis/Special Project Papers completed; entrants notified
- Oct (TBD):** Selected Master's Thesis/Special Project Paper author presents 5-minute summary of paper to AAPRA members (in-person or virtually)

## Best Paper:

### Master's Thesis/Special Project Paper Award Eligibility

1. Open to graduate students in parks, recreation, tourism or related professions. The submission should make a contribution 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 master's degree.
3. The submission must have been completed within the previous two (2) calendar years including spring semester of the current year. Thus, for the 2023 award eligible papers are those completed in 2021, 2022, and Spring 2023.
4. The author of the selected Master's Thesis/Special Project paper must present a 5-minute synopsis of their research finding(s) and its implications for the profession to the Academy membership either in-person or virtually.

## Criteria

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

1. **TIMELINESS, IMPORTANCE, AND CONTRIBUTION TO PARK AND RECREATION ADMINISTRATION** (15 points)
2. **QUALITY OF PROBLEM DEVELOPMENT** (20 pts): The approach to the topic should be clearly presented and demonstrate knowledge of methods appropriate to addressing the stated problem and its objectives. Methodological quality will be judged in the context of the discipline and type of study/special project which is most appropriate.
3. **CREATIVE APPROACH** (20 pts): The study should make a creative contribution to the profession. Does the work examine a new problem or an existing problem in a new way? Does the study/special project make a creative contribution to the knowledge of park and recreation administration? Does the study/special project use new techniques to examine an existing problem? Does the study/special project extend beyond present understanding of the topic?
4. **USEFULNESS AND APPLICABILITY** (25 pts): While the development of theory is important, the study/special project should have implications for the improved practice of park and recreation administration, including addressing elements related to justice, equity, diversity and inclusion. This criterion is concerned with measuring practicability and application in a variety of settings.
5. **QUALITY OF PRESENTATION** (20 pts): The quality of the writing, including readability and use of graphics, is measured by this criterion. Technical jargon may be necessary,

but the writing should be understood by practitioners. Attributes measured as part of this criterion include organization, continuity, and clarity, along with quality of the writing style and grammar.

## Entry Procedure

Submit online application by June 16, 2023, along with the appropriate files **insert Submittable link**.

1. The cover page should include the title of the Master's Thesis/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 Master's Thesis/Special Project 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 Master's Thesis/Special Project paper by July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023. 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 end of August, 2023.

Questions? Contact Dr. Deb Jordan, AAPRA Best Paper Committee Chair; East Carolina University, [jordand@ecu.edu](mailto:jordand@ecu.edu), 252.737.2990.

American Academy for Park & Recreation Administration  
*To Inspire, Influence and Advance the Park and Recreation Profession*

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