

## New Program Information

**1. Institution:**

Texas State University-San Marcos

**2. Program Name: (Show how the program would appear on the Coordinating Board's program inventory)**

Undergraduate Certificate in Environmental Interpretation

**3. Proposed CIP Code:**

03.0104.00

**4. Brief Program Description: (Describe the program and the educational objectives)**

The proposed Certificate in Environmental Interpretation is intended to provide a relevant background to prepare students to work as interpretive guides in parks and other tourism venues and to work in the professional areas of public information/education in resource management agencies. Educational objectives are (1) to know and apply the concepts, principles, and methods of environmental interpretation (2) to know geographic concepts and skills that support holistic and thematic interpretation of places and regions, as specified by interpretive principles.

**5. Administrative Unit: (Identify where the program would fit within the organizational structure of the university)**

Department of Geography, College of Liberal Arts

**6. Proposed Implementation Date: (Report the first semester and year that students would enter the program)**

Fall 2009

**7. Contact Person: (Provide contact information for the person who can answer specific questions about the program)**

**Name:** James Kimmel, Richard Earl  
**Title:** Professor, Professor and Undergraduate Program Coordinator  
**E-mail:** jk02txstate.edu, re02@txstate.edu  
**Phone:** 512-245-3201, 512-245-3204

## **I. Need**

Many agencies with natural resource protection and recreation responsibilities have specific “interpreter” and “public information” positions including the U.S. National Park Service, state park systems including Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Forest Service and river authorities including the Lower Colorado River Authority. These agencies seek qualified and certified interpreters. In addition, the rapidly growing ecotourism industry employs certified interpreters as guides, which are the core of the experience offered to ecotourists. While interpreters benefit from the geographic perspective, other majors also provide an appropriate background, including history, biology, and HPER. The certificate is important for employment in both the public and private sectors. The public sector, including the state and national park systems, require certification for interpreters. Private sector tourism businesses rely on certified interpreters to increase the credibility of their trips and activities. The courses can also apply to a student’s major in geography, so the certificate does not imply an increase in hours.

## **B. Student Demand**

The Certificate in Environmental Interpretation is intended to provide a relevant background to prepare students to work as interpretive guides in park and other tourism venues and work in the professional areas of public information/education in resource management agencies.

The Department of Geography has offered courses in nature and heritage tourism since 1997. The major reason for developing this Certificate is that students recognize the importance of interpretation as a professional focus that is not currently available at Texas State, but is truly the heart of the expanding nature tourism and recreation industry. Most students who completed the Nature and Heritage Tourism minor and who were employed in the profession took jobs that focused exclusively or primarily on interpretation.

Dr. Kimmel is certified as an Interpretive Trainer by the National Association for Interpretation (NAI). In 2004 he taught GEO 4322 Interpretive Environmental Geography, with an enrollment of 16 students. The NAI certification was offered as an extra cost option for the course. All but one of the students opted for certification.

Dr. Kimmel has been asked by about a dozen current students if he could provide interpretive training of some kind. Based on those inquiries and on informal surveys of students in “feeder” courses such as River Basin Management (GEO 4314) and Texas Geography (GEO 3329), we estimate that at least ten students will pursue the Certificate in the first year. Students from the Southwestern Studies Program, Anthropology, History, and Biology will likely be interested as well, but these have not been approached since the program is not yet approved.

The proposed Certificate can be coordinated with the NAI certification, but provides a much greater depth of substantive knowledge. That is, the NAI certification focuses exclusively on interpretive principles and methods, but offers no subject matter content. The Certificate proposed here will not only offer preparation in the delivery of interpretation, but will ensure that students have a breadth of coursework that will serve as a solid basis to help them develop the content of their interpretive programs and materials. The NAI certification is really intended for people who have not had formal education in interpretation. Our Certificate will provide formal education in interpretation. However, students may want to obtain the NAI certification because it is recognized professionally, just as planning students pursue AICP

certification or accounting majors seek CPA status. We anticipate that interest will grow as we begin actively advertising and recruiting and as the program builds visibility and momentum.

**C. Enrollment Projections – Use this table to show the estimated cumulative headcount and full-time student equivalent (FTSE) enrollment for the first five years of the program. Enrollment projections shall reflect student demand estimates and shall ensure financial self-sufficiency by the end of the program’s fifth year. In calculating yearly FTSE, 30 SCH equals 1 FTSE for bachelor’s programs and 24 SCH equals 1 FTSE for master’s programs.**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Cumulative Headcount</b>	10	30	40	20	20
<b>FTSE</b>	5	15	20	20	20
<b>Attrition</b>	0	2	4	4	4
<b>Graduation</b>	0	8	16	16	16

As described above, these projections are based on informal surveys of students in obvious “feeder” classes and in student inquiries.

## **II. Quality**

**A. Certificate Requirements – Use this table to show the degree requirements of the program. Required courses are taken by *all* students in the program. These courses shall meet all requirements for accreditation, licensure, or certification and shall be consistent with similar programs in the state and nation. Prescribed electives are a list of specific courses from which students must choose to meet curricular requirements of the program. Prescribed electives shall complement the required courses and are numerous enough to provide breadth and depth of study. Free electives are selected by the student, subject only to advisor approval.**

<b>Course</b>	<b>Credit Hours</b>
<b>Required:</b> GEO 4322	3
<b>Prescribed Electives:</b> GEO 2410 GEO 3313 GEO 3325 GEO 4313 GEO 4316 GEO 4393	12
<b>Total</b>	15

## Admission Requirements

Applicants to the Environmental Interpretation Certificate program will be required to meet the following criteria:

- Texas State University Undergraduate degree seeking or post-baccalaureate student in good standing.
- Minimum grade in all required/prescribed electives courses of at least a “C.”
- Minimum cumulative GPA in all required/prescribed electives courses of a GPA of at least 2.5/4.0.

The application packet will consist of the following materials:

Certificate application form, Transcripts

### **B. Curriculum – Use these tables to identify the required courses and prescribed electives of the program.**

<b>Prefix and Number</b>	<b>Required Course</b>	<b>SCH</b>
GEO 4322	Interpretive Environmental Geography	3
	<b>Prescribed Electives (Choose 4 from below)</b>	12
GEO 2410	Introduction to Physical Geography	
GEO 3313	Natural Resource Use and Planning	
GEO 3325	Geomorphology	
GEO 4313	Environmental Management	
GEO 4316	Landscape Biogeography	
GEO 4393	Cultural Ecology	
	<b>Total</b>	15

### **C. Faculty – Use these tables to provide information about Core and Support faculty. Add an asterisk (\*) before the name of the individual who will have direct administrative responsibilities for the program.**

*Qualifications of Faculty for Bachelor’s Programs* - To meet minimum SACS standards, 25 percent of faculty supporting the program shall have terminal degrees. Beyond that minimum standard, the percentage of faculty with terminal degrees shall compare favorably to the percentage of faculty with terminal degrees at similar programs in the state and nation.

*Qualifications of Faculty for Master’s Programs* - All faculty supporting the master’s degree program shall have terminal degrees.

A core faculty member is tenured or tenure-track who devotes an average of fifty percent or more of his or her teaching time in the program. Some programs such as interdisciplinary degrees may have core faculty devoting less than 50 percent of their teaching time to the program. The background and education of each core faculty member shall be in the field of the

**program or in a closely related field. A minimum number of core faculty shall be devoted specifically to the proposed program:**

- **Bachelor’s program – three FTE or two FTE if comprised of four individual faculty members. (Note: The standard for upper-level institutions could be lower for those programs in which lower-division courses are required for the major and taken at feeder institutions.)**
- **Master’s program – three FTE or two FTE if comprised of four individual faculty members.**

<b>Name of Core Faculty and Faculty Rank</b>	<b>Highest Degree and Awarding Institution</b>	<b>Courses Assigned in Program</b>	<b>% Time Assigned To Program</b>
*James Kimmel, Professor	Ph.D., The University of Texas	GEO 4322, GEO 4393	25
James Petersen, Professor	Ph.D., University of Utah	GEO 3325	5
David Butler, Professor	Ph.D., University of Kansas	GEO 3325, GEO 4316	5
Richard Earl, Professor	Ph.D., Arizona State University	GEO 4313	5
Ronald Hagelman, Assistant Professor	Ph.D., Texas State University-San Marcos	GEO 4313	5
Mark Carter, Senior Lecturer	M.A.G., Texas State University-San Marcos	GEO 3313	5
James Peterson, Professor	Ph.D., University of Utah	GEO 2410	5
Laura Stroup, Assistant Professor	Ph.D. University of South Carolina	GEO 2410	5

- D. Library – Provide the library director’s assessment of library resources necessary for the program. Describe plans to build the library holdings to support the program. Library resources shall meet the standards of the appropriate accrediting body or other professional association and be adequate to support the program.**

No new library resources will be required for this Certificate, as the resources needed are the same as those needed for existing classes and programs.

- E. Facilities and Equipment – Describe the availability and adequacy of facilities and equipment to support the program. Describe plans for facility and equipment improvements/additions.**

No new facilities or renovations are needed for this Certificate.

- F. Accreditation – If the discipline has a national accrediting body, identify the appropriate accrediting agency and describe plans to obtain accreditation or provide a rationale for not pursuing accreditation. Include an anticipated timeline for the plan. The Coordinating Board requires institutions to meet accreditation deadlines for certain programs as a contingency of continued program approval.**

There currently is no national accrediting body for this Certificate.

**III. Costs and Funding**

**Five-Year Costs and Funding Sources - Use this table to show five-year costs and sources of funding for the program.**

Five-Year Costs, \$		Five-Year Funding, \$	
Personnel	0	Reallocated Funds	0
Facilities & Equipment	0	Formula Funding	80,000
Library, Supplies, & Materials	0	Special Item Funding	0
Other	0	Other	156,000
Total Costs	0	Total Funding	236,000

- 1. Report costs for new faculty hires, graduate assistants, and technical support personnel. For new faculty, prorate individual salaries as a percentage of the time assigned to the program. If existing faculty will contribute to program, include costs necessary to maintain existing programs (e.g., cost of adjunct faculty to cover courses previously taught by faculty who would teach in new program).**

Faculty listed in Section II-C teach the respective courses as part of their current workload. All courses in the certificate program are among the regular courses of Department of Geography that are taught on a regular basis. We do expect that the number of students in each class will increase as the certificate program grows.

There are no new anticipated costs for the proposed certificate.

- 2. Specify other costs here (e.g., administrative costs, travel).**
  
- 3. Indicate formula funding for students new to the institution because of the program; formula funding should be included only for years three through five of the program and should reflect enrollment projections for years three through five.**

Formula Funding is included for years 3-5.

- 4. Report other sources of funding here. In-hand grants, “likely” future grants, and designated tuition and fees can be included.**

Designated Tuition is included for the first 5 years.

Core faculty for this certificate (Kimmel) has a record of obtaining external funding from agencies that will benefit from this program—e.g. U.S. Department of Agriculture.

**Signature Page**  
Certificate in Environmental Interpretation

1. Adequacy of Funding – The chief executive officer shall sign the following statement:

*I certify that the institution has adequate funds to cover the costs of the new program. Furthermore, the new program will not reduce the effectiveness or quality of existing programs at the institution.*

---

Chief Executive Officer

Date

2. Board of Regents Approval – A member of the Board of Regents or designee shall sign the following statement:

*On behalf of the Board of Regents, I certify that the Board of Regents has approved the program.*

---

Board of Regents (Designee)

Date

3. Board of Regents Certification of Criteria for Commissioner or Assistant Commissioner Approval – For a program to be approved by the Commissioner or the Assistant Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Research, the Board of Regents or designee must certify that the new program meets the eight criteria under TAC Section 5.50 (b): The criteria stipulate that the program shall:

- (1) be within the institution's current Table of Programs;
- (2) have a curriculum, faculty, resources, support services, and other components of a degree program that are comparable to those of high quality programs in the same or similar disciplines at other institutions;
- (3) have sufficient clinical or in-service sites, if applicable, to support the program;
- (4) be consistent with the standards of the Commission of Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and, if applicable, with the standards or discipline-specific accrediting agencies and licensing agencies;
- (5) attract students on a long-term basis and produce graduates who would have opportunities for employment; or the program is appropriate for the development of a well-rounded array of basic baccalaureate degree programs at the institution;
- (6) not unnecessarily duplicate existing programs at other institutions;
- (7) not be dependent on future Special Item funding;
- (8) have new five-year costs that would not exceed \$2 million.

*On behalf of the Board of Regents, I certify that the new program meets the criteria specified under TAC Section 5.50 (b).*

---

Board of Regents (Designee)

Date