

*River Management Society*  
**River Studies and Leadership Certificate**

Guiding Document

The River Studies and Leadership Certificate (RSLC) was created to help cultivate the next generation of river leaders, those who understand river processes and the systems in which they must operate in order to protect, manage and restore them wisely and effectively. To achieve a holistic understanding of rivers, students need to be grounded in the complexity of river science, possess foundational geospatial skills, and develop a basic level of competence on the river. Globally, freshwater issues are looming, and river science, education, policy, and management are central to the sustainable use of our limited freshwater resources. The RSLC is a collaborative project of the River Management Society, Colorado Mesa University, Northern Arizona University, Prescott College, Sierra Nevada University, University of Tennessee Chattanooga, University of Utah, Virginia Commonwealth University, Western Carolina University and Western Washington University. The certificate acknowledges a specific quality and quantity of river-related coursework and associated hands-on experience that provides students with a basic and essential understanding of river systems.

The RSLC certificate is sponsored by and administered through the River Management Society (RMS), in close collaboration with the partnering academic institutions. Each student's coursework is developed with and approved by the student's faculty advisor and may be reviewed by the RSLC Standing Committee, comprised of faculty representatives from the participating institutions and RMS.

This RSLC program should be considered a "polished work in progress" to be honed as needed, and the certificate will evolve as students move through the program. This document provides background on the administrative and academic structure and procedures of the RSLC program.

Certificate Award Authority and Eligible Students

The primary group that created and will oversee the RSLC program is the RSLC Standing Committee, which consists of representatives from the RMS and the institutions of higher education that have approved the RSLC program. As of Fall 2020, this includes Colorado Mesa University, Northern Arizona University, Prescott College, Sierra Nevada University, University of Tennessee Chattanooga, University of Utah, Virginia Commonwealth University, Western Carolina University and Western Washington University; other institutions may be added in the future. As students move through the program, the Standing Committee may revise the certificate program to adapt to the needs of students and the partnered institutions. The RSLC Standing Committee will endorse and approve changes to the certificate curriculum: each representative then takes these to their institution's appropriate decision-making entity for approval. An annual review of the certificate's structure, procedures, etc. will be conducted by the Standing Committee.

The certificate program is designed for undergraduate students as a certification of concentrated coursework in river studies and fulfillment of a river-related professional experience to supplement their Bachelor's degree. The River Studies and Leadership Certificate can be earned

by both undergraduate and students who are enrolled at participating colleges and universities which have approved the certificate program.

### Certificate Coursework

The RSLC provides students a cogent body of academic coursework in:

- River Science (1 course)
- River Policy (1 course)
- Geographic Information Science and Technology (1 course)
- Swiftwater Rescue (1 course)

In addition, students are required to take two courses from one of the following emphasis areas:

- River Science
- River-based Policy and Management
- River-based Recreation, Education, and Tourism

All courses that have been approved for core and emphasis knowledge are listed in the River Studies and Leadership Certificate Program document. Accurate course listings from each institution are key to the student's ability to plan his/her path through the certificate program; therefore, each institution will make an effort to review and update their RSLC course offerings.

### Professional Experience Requirement - Learning Applied in a Professional Context

In addition to the required coursework, the RSLC includes a requirement that the student's knowledge be applied in a professional context. This requirement can be met through a credit-earning internship, paid internship, paid professional experience, independent study or course-related professional experience. The experience must encompass a minimum of 90 hours of work (or 2 credit-hours) and will be reviewed and approved by the RSLC Standing Committee to certify the adequacy of the student's proposal to meet this requirement. Students with recent relevant professional or internship experiences may request that those experiences be used to fulfill this requirement.

As a part of the RSLC program, RMS offers students exciting opportunities for professional networking and collaboration. Students are encouraged to use RMS as a source for their river studies and professional networking. Each student receives an RMS student membership that can be renewed until they graduate, which includes a subscription to the *RMS Journal* and access to national and regional chapter events (e.g. chapter floats, river field trips & workshops, swiftwater rescue courses, etc.). They are invited to attend either the biennial River Management Symposium or comparable event supported by RMS for which registration fees are waived scholarships are available to help defer other expenses. Students are required to share aspects of their river studies with the RMS community by either presenting at the River Management Symposium or publishing an article in the *RMS Journal*, a quarterly publication.

Once an RSLC student's membership expires that student may 'renew' the membership for free at the Professional level, which affords additional member benefits.

River Studies and Leadership Certificate Standing Committee

It is important that the River Studies and Leadership Certificate Committee stay actively involved in this program with the River Management Society. The River Studies and Leadership Certificate Committee includes:

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