

In FSU's Professional Golf Management program ... **students swing for success**

By Barry Ray
NEWS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

With superstars such as Tiger Woods leading the way, the golf industry has experienced tremendous growth in recent years. According to the National Golf Foundation, some 30 million Americans now play golf for relaxation, exercise and socializing on an estimated 14,500 courses located throughout the United States.

Not everyone who swings a club will be the next Tiger Woods, of course. But for young golfers, Florida State University offers another way to turn their love of the sport into a lucrative profession: the Professional Golf Management (PGM) major.

"The PGM major at FSU offers students the education and training that can make them successful in a wide variety of fields," said James A. "Jim" Riscigno, director of the program. They receive a Bachelor of Science degree from the College of Business with a hospitality concentration from the Dedman School of Hospitality.

The program, now 6 years old, exposes students to career opportunities in everything from country club management to sales and merchandising, coaching, broadcasting and journalism, golf course planning and development, just to name a few.

"Virtually every FSU student who graduates with a degree in professional

golf management is guaranteed a high-paying and rewarding job," Riscigno said. "The demand is so great for young people with these skills that we have no problem placing our graduates in good jobs."

In fact, recent program graduates now are working at some of the most prestigious golfing facilities in the nation, Riscigno said. Those facilities include the majestic Pinehurst Resort in North Carolina; the Robert Trent Jones



Jim Riscigno

Golf Trail in Alabama; the Westin Mission Hills Resort in Rancho Mirage, Calif.; the Ponte Vedra Golf Club and Inn in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.; the Atlanta National Golf Club; the Atlanta Athletic Club; the Kelly Plantation Golf Club in Destin, Fla.; the Camp Creek Golf Club near Panama City Beach, Fla.; The Villages Executive Golf Trail, located near Orlando, Fla.; and Cane Garden Country Club in The Villages.

And, lest anyone think that earning a degree in professional golf management is as easy as rolling out of bed each day and hitting the links, think again.

"The PGM major at FSU is quite rigorous — more so than many other

academic programs," Riscigno said. "Yes, our students must maintain their golfing skills through daily practice — but that's just one aspect of it. They also must complete a four-and-a-half-year curriculum that encompasses everything from financial accounting to food and beverage management to agronomy while maintaining a 3.0 GPA. In addition, they must complete 16 months of internships in at least three settings."

But that's not all. In order to graduate in the PGM major and receive the coveted designation of PGA Professional, students also must participate in a Player Developmental Program until their golfing skills are sufficient to pass a difficult Playing Ability Test administered by the Professional Golfers' Association of America. And they must complete three levels of intensive study in the PGA's own Golf Professional Training Program.

"It's a very challenging major, there's no doubt about it," Riscigno said. "But the rewards make it more than worthwhile. Students who successfully complete the PGM major can just about write their own tickets in some of the finest establishments in the country."

FSU's Professional Golf Management major is one of 18 college programs accredited by the PGA, located throughout the United States.



Former FSU men's golf coach Ernie Lanford (foreground left), who now serves as coordinator of internships with the Professional Golf Management program, congratulates recent graduates.