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DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION, PARK AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT

BEST PRACTICES IN COLLEGIATE OUTDOOR RECREATION

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ABSTRACT

College outdoor recreation programs serve as a way for students to engage outside of the classroom, recreate with friends new and old, and build skills and relationships in beautiful places. These programs have a rich history in the United States, but are not without the challenges of adapting to the changing nature of post-secondary campus recreation operations. The purpose of this study was to further explore the themes generated from exploratory research at Penn State and assess if they were applicable to a broader range of college and university outdoor programs across the country. From the exploratory research, five core themes were identified as areas in which programs triumph and struggle: a) programming, b) organizational structure, c) financing, d) student leadership, and e) risk management. These five themes were subsequently incorporated as open-ended questions in a survey distributed to outdoor program leaders at thirteen U.S. public colleges and universities with more than 10,000 undergraduate students. The results from this survey illustrate the diversity of campus-based outdoor programming across the country. Yet, respondents mentioned similar challenges in areas such as academic relevancy, safety and staff training, availability of resources to provide professional staffing, and desire to engage as many students as possible. Outdoor programs need to prove their worth and provide for students if they are to stay viable within their respective campus recreation programs. While the results from this study represent just a small sampling of schools, programs and ideas, they may inform future efforts to foster collaboration between universities (and within universities) in order to implement best practices for the benefit of students.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

College is more than just time spent in the classroom! Students across the United States take to thousands of different extra-curricular activities to augment their college experience and fill the time between academic classes. The term student engagement is used to describe these experiences. The definition of this term varies amongst academics, but Schlecty (1994) breaks it down into three parts: attraction to the task, persistence in the task despite challenges and visible delight in accomplishment of the task. From this, Strong, Silver and Robinson (1995) describe four essential goals to accomplish this: success, curiosity, originality and relationships. Yet, these goals can also be applied to university experiences and activities outside of the classroom. Extra-curricular activities, while not completed for a grade, should still provide opportunities for success, curiosity, originality and relationships. The difference in setting from a university academic setting may even help make these four things easier for students to achieve. Extra-curricular activities can range from school-sponsored clubs to sports to social groups. Students can participate in activities offered by university-run organizations or student-run clubs. A balance of student-run clubs and university-run organizations are important to have at universities, as both allow for different degrees of student involvement and leadership. When students are given a prominent voice and responsibility in various types of extra-curricular activities, they can learn from their experiences and make it a framework for future experiences to come (Kezar, 2005). In particular, college outdoor recreation programs have a strong history of incorporating student voices in programming. Bell (2005; 2010) and Gass (1987) found that outdoor orientation programs benefit students. These types of programs also enhance retention rates (Gass 1987) and social support (Bell 2005, 2006). O'Keefe (1989) found that the student leadership role in these programs is very important and can contribute to their

success, depending on training and how much leadership and input the students are given. Opportunities for students to participate and lead then actively engage them in these outdoor programs. Research by Bell (2006) shows that these programs are almost always received positively. Outdoor programming is not only for orientation programs though: these programs are continued into the academic year. Academic year-long outdoor adventure programs are described by Watters (1999) as: “program services that provide one or more of the following... equipment rental, equipment repair...retail sales of equipment, outdoor programs, events and activities.” This type of program is what the scope of this thesis focuses on.

Within post-secondary education, there have been numerous organizational/societal trends prompting university leadership to alter the structure and services of these programs. These changes or developments may have long-term implications on student engagement and leadership development. In order to understand how outdoor recreation programs have become an important element of the college experience, we must first understand a bit about their history, growth, and evolving practices based on changing conditions within higher education. What follows is a discussion of university outdoor recreation programs, core conditions or characteristics which shape their administration/management, and changing practices or policies that have recently altered their delivery. The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) is then used as a case example to explore issues related to the management and success of outdoor recreation program. Penn State underwent a significant change in the structure/delivery of their outdoor program in the early to mid-2000s. Informal interviews with various university stakeholders helped to identify core themes, from which to pursue a more global assessment of university outdoor recreation programs. This chapter concludes by arguing that a more systematic assessment of current university outdoor programs challenges and best practices is needed. Such an assessment should focus on the core themes/topics of programming, organizational structure, budgeting, student leadership and risk management.

College Outdoor Recreation Programs

Outdoor focused clubs at colleges and universities have been a part of campus recreation since the beginning of the 20th century, with the first two programs established by Dartmouth College and Penn State (Webb, 2000). These types of programs became popular teaching tools for not only wilderness skills, but also for leadership and self-reflection with student groups and businesses (Attarain, 2001). Today, hundreds of schools have some sort of student club or university-run program that focuses on outdoor recreation and adventure programming. The International Outing Club Association (IOCA) has member universities in every state ranging in size from small liberal-arts schools to large, Division I schools (IOCA, 2006). Further, the Association for Outdoor Recreation and Education (AORE) is a professional group that includes over 70 schools that run an outdoor adventure and recreation program of some kind. The schools that are members of AORE share a common purpose of providing quality outdoor recreation programs to their students (AORE, 2014). The establishment of these programs allows for the analysis of the different structures and operational strategies used by different outdoor programs. The factors that influence operation and the models used to organize the program structure range from leaderless team expeditions to guided services. This model is further described in the next section.

Outdoor Recreation Program Administrative Structures

The factors that influence the administration of outdoor clubs or programs include autonomy, marketing, student development, and risk management (Bell, 2006). It is important for students to feel a sense of ownership for organizations they are involved in, which is a driving force behind the upkeep of student-run programs. This notion of autonomy parallels the definition of current student engagement efforts as both go hand-in-hand to encourage students to participate in and contribute to their organizations, and the community at-large. Marketing has changed the perception of outdoor trips and a standard of safety and excellence has emerged. The development of students can happen informally

through experiences in the outdoors. More often, it happens through specific education measures and deliberate teaching. This teaching can be done by students, professional staff, or any combination of the two. Students are developed not only by learning outdoor skills, but also by the opportunity to teach and lead in outdoor programs. Outdoor programs must incorporate extensive planning for the mitigation of risk in their programming. Risk management is the systematic analysis and planning for minimizing harm to anyone involved in activity, while providing protection from legal liability (Drury, Bonney, Berman, & Wagstaff, 2005). This definition helps guide outdoor recreation programs in their decision-making so that their participants/users stay safe, and that the program and school are protected. This factor is prevalent in the other factors as well keeping student leaders and participants safe while helping them develop their skills, and showing this safety and fun through marketing. These particular themes or concerns were evident in the exploratory research conducted at Penn State to inform this paper (discussed in a forthcoming section). The degree to which the student voice is incorporated into operational and administrative decisions serves as the basis of the current continuum model proposed by Watters (1987) in Figure 1.

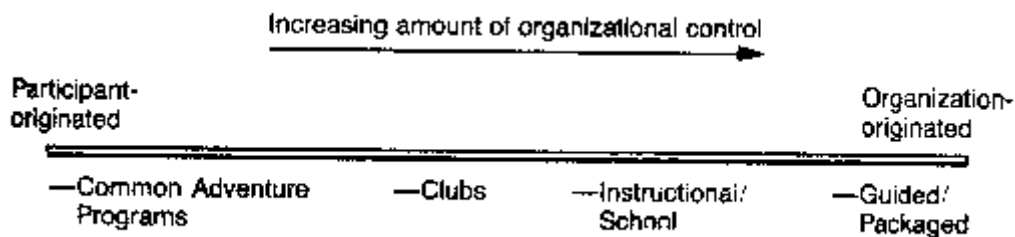


Figure 1: Outdoor Programming Models Continuum from Watters (1987)

The common adventure program structure first appeared in 1972 and was significant in the early years of organized outdoor programming (Watters, 1999). This model does not focus on a leader and is loosely structured, with lots of room for input from participants. Common adventure became widely adapted at universities. However, this model fell into disfavor when several lawsuits challenged the notion of “leader-less” trips, making it harder to protect the university against liability. The club structure draws from the spontaneity and democratic style of Common Adventure, but there are appointed leadership positions, often from elected leaders. Many student-run outing clubs, like those at Dartmouth and Penn State, fall into this category. Some college programs fall here, especially if they offer academic credit for their experiences. Schools like Outward Bound and the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) require their participants to learn all of the basic skills of an activity to competency, so they also fall here. The guided/package structure has the most control by paid staff and the most oversight on trip planning. This seems to be a growing trend, as many schools employ full time directors and coordinators, as well as graduate students to manage outdoor programs (AORE, 2014). Some schools lie at the left-side of this model, as they charge for their programs and the guides/leaders are expected to facilitate the activity and participants do not have to specially learn some skills (Watters, 1987). The creation of these four structures helped focus the outdoor recreation industry into labelling the kind of programming that is offered by different institutions. It is important to note that outdoor programs have been shifting models of leadership and delivery – and in many cases their programming structure, where they are housed, and to what university units they report to/serve. A discussion of why these shifts have occurred follows.

Why Do Colleges and Universities Change Outdoor Programming Structures?

Most college programs fall into one of the different structures. Some schools start with one structure, but then change structure over the life of the program. In many cases, student club structures have changed because of liability. Traditional laws about negligence and care have been used by

universities to govern programs since the 1980s. It has now become standard practice that students and universities share the responsibility of keeping students safe when engaging in extra-curricular activities (Hall, 2009). The issue of liability can be looked at in the context of outdoor recreation programs to see how universities combat the risks that are inherent when participating in these outdoor activities.

Programs like Dartmouth and Penn State began as common adventure and club programs, entirely organized and conducted by students. As early as 1975, recommendations arose for student clubs to have college staff oversee their programs (Arnold, Erickson, Fritz and Spechalske, 1975). Arnold suggests that colleges take responsibility for not only the schedule and finances of a club, but also the first aid, insurance coverage and legal liability. This pushed the clubs toward the school and guided/packaged structure. A monumental case in the move towards student safety in outdoor recreation came about in 1996 with the Regents of the University of California vs. Rottegen. A student was killed while participating in a rock climbing class, yet the university was not found liable because the student was not exposed to above-ordinary risk for that activity (1996). While the university was not found at fault, this case brought to light the importance for university insight into the risk-management within programs. Programs limit liability by collecting waivers and making budget decisions and have increased the involvement of coaches and staff over the years (Schneider et al, 2008). The involvement of professional staff for liability reasons has driven some substantial changes in college outdoor recreation programs.

Penn State's Outdoor Program: A Case of Structural Change

While liability has pushed change in these programs, other factors such as facility spaces, access to financial resources and activity-specific concerns (e.g. potential rock climbing equipment usage) have caused university programs to analyze their offerings and make adjustments. However, these causes and their potential effects have not been systematically evaluated. The lack of literature about causal factors of structure change and the potential impacts on college outdoor recreation programs prompted a more in-

depth investigation of Penn State's experience with transition as the outdoor recreation programs there have had a shift in outdoor recreation programming over the past 10 years. While the outdoor recreation offerings at Penn State are longstanding and have been fruitful for decades, the early 2000s saw a transition to a different operational model. Changing practices in the college outdoor recreation field prompted Penn State to review its outdoor recreation program. Liability, operational procedures and the rental program were examined as a part of the transition. When transition happens within an organization, it is not only an administrative process, but also a social process (Cule & Robey, 2004). According to anecdotal accounts, the social process of the transition to the club and guided structure at Penn State was poorly received by users from the school, as well as the community. The narratives or themes that described this transition provided grounds for developing themes on organizational change and its effects upon the providers and end-users of these programs. These themes were then used to describe and underscore potential best practices for university outdoor programming..

The following section describes the themes highlighted through key informant interviews that took place at Penn State over a nine-month period from September 2013 to April 2014. Key informants were drawn from the Penn State Outing Club (PSOC), Adventure Recreation (AR), Penn State Club Sports and the Penn State Administration (PSU Admin) . Interviewees were asked a series of questions to determine their involvement in their respective organization, what they see as challenges in their organization as well as in the relationship between PSOC and AR, and suggestions they have for the future. The names and job titles of the informants have been kept private and only themes and statements are provided. The themes that came out of these interviews fell into five categories: programming, organizational structure, budget/financial, student leadership and risk management. The findings from these interviews led to the decision to look for the prevalence of these themes within other collegiate outdoor recreation programs. Therefore, a broader study of outdoor recreation programs surfaced using these themes, and is described later in this thesis.

The Penn State Outing Club and Penn State Adventure Recreation

Penn State operates a student-run Outing Club (PSOC) and a guided, university-run program, Adventure Recreation (AR). PSOC has been a functioning student organization since 1920 and is currently a member of the Club Sports department. It originally provided trips focused on skiing, trekking, hiking, archery, caving, climbing and boating (Penn State Outing Club, 2011). Currently, PSOC mostly offers hiking and backpacking trips, with some bouldering trips and kayaking clinics offered. AR was created in 2007 through a task force instituted by the Office of Risk Management, Department of Athletics and University directors. This program was created to take some of the risk and liability of gear rental and maintenance off of PSOC and implement a full-time university staff position to oversee the program. Adventure Recreation currently offers gear rental and program offerings such as fishing, climbing, hiking, winter sports and paddling.

Themes from Key Informant Exploratory Research

The interviews showed the similarities and differences in the operational practices of both PSOC and AR. The missions and values are similar in that both programs look to provide positive experiences in the outdoors. The types of programming are different, as PSOC focuses on backpacking and AR focuses on paddling and climbing because AR manages the technical gear associated with those programs. The takeover of gear during the transition was “hasty,” and parties felt as if the gear was “taken overnight.” The informants stressed that there is room for collaboration, but that the organizations had struggled with it in the past. Both departments are housed in the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics but will be moving to the Department of Student Affairs in the near future. PSOC heavily relies on the students and falls under the club structure described by Watters (1987). Many trips are planned common-adventure style, but the club leadership submits paperwork and does have oversight over trips. AR is between the instructional/school and guided/packaged structures. Participants have the opportunity to take ownership

and learn skills while on trips, but they are charged a fee that covers all amenities for the trip like transportation, food and gear. Financial management is the underlying concern and point of contention for most programs. Across the university, departments and clubs apply for funding from the University Park Allocation Committee (UPAC), the organization that disseminates funds from the university's student activity fee to support the cost of activities for students. While UPAC funding is an important resource for both organizations, PSOC uses club dues, small trip payments and merchandise sales for income, while AR charges flat trip fees. PSOC officers manage money in different ways each year, but AR's budget is set in a more systematic way, and there is not as much room for decision making once the budget has been approved. PSOC has stressed the importance of student leadership for years, and uses it as a key differentiation between theirs and AR's programming. Trips are all student-led, with all gear, food, and logistics planned by the trip leaders. AR also has students that lead trips, but they are paid university employees. The students who work for AR receive more extensive formalized training in several technical and leadership areas than PSOC trip leaders. Club Sports puts a strong emphasis on the development of students through sport and leadership, while AR focuses on providing quality trips for students. Overall, both organizations were satisfied with their level of student leadership, even though those levels differ. The PSU Admin was a critical player in the transition to the current state of PSOC and AR. PSOC did have accountability through Club Sports and their advisor and leadership team, but the creation of AR put the most liable aspect, gear, under the sole control of University staff. Students lost access to the gear they had enjoyed for years as the PSU Admin gained control of a potentially risky situation. The handling of the transition in regards to risk management brought up differing opinions by informants, but almost all agreed that risk management was important to consider for the future of both organizations.

Summary of Key Informant Interviews and the Creation of the Survey

In summary, the transition in structure was necessary in the eyes of university, but having two different programs providing similar programming resulted in a strange situation. The programs do work together, but there is a belief that both should exist separately because students should be able to choose if they want the club or the school/guided model for their recreation. This background research led to the desire to know if these themes were present within other university programs. Do challenges in programming, structure, budgeting, student leadership and risk management influence the practices of programs elsewhere? These themes have the potential to influence the best practices of collegiate outdoor recreation programs. Therefore, a survey was created which included questions similar to those asked at Penn State. The questions revolve around the five themes identified in the Penn State data and are open-ended, to allow different school program staff to interpret and provide the background on their program. This survey, in combination with the Penn State interviews, should provide insight to the current state of collegiate outdoor recreation programs at large public schools in the United States.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to further explore the themes generated from exploratory research at Penn State and to determine if they were applicable to a broader range of college and university outdoor programs across the country. Further, the intent was to assess and better articulate best practices on these topics to inform the industry and help programs maximize their function and influence on student life. This will be done through the analysis of open-ended responses from surveys conducted of outdoor programs from public universities across the country. The overarching research question asks what kinds of challenges are faced by large public colleges and universities within their outdoor programs, and what they are doing to respond to these challenges and maximize their effectiveness, especially in the areas of programming, organizational structure, budgeting, student leadership, and risk management.

Chapter 2 Methods

Data Collection

The Association for Outdoor Recreation and Education (AORE) membership list was used to collect contact information for professionals charged with administering or leading campus outdoor recreation programs at universities. The criteria for choosing study participants were based upon their university's characteristics. Characteristics considered were public (vs. private) status, an undergraduate enrollment greater than 10,000 students, and a functioning university run outdoor program. The intention was to survey staff from outdoor, extra-curricular, campus recreation-based programs, not outdoor orientation programs or academic classes.

Data was collected from an online survey distributed to AORE members from universities that met the criteria. An initial email asking for voluntary participation in this study was sent to professionals at over 70 colleges/universities in August 2014. Nineteen individuals responded to the initial email and in September 2014 they were sent an email link asking them to complete the survey using the Qualtrics online survey platform. The survey was available to study participants for three weeks, and non-respondents were reminded to take the survey one week before the close of the data collection period.

Measurement

The online survey consisted of 25 questions. The first four questions asked for basic demographic information, such as the name of the university, outdoor program name, years of program existence, and the mission and goals of the program. The types of programming were also analyzed with the demographic information to help create a clearer picture of the offerings of each program. Then, open-

ended questions based on the five themes identified during exploratory research, were posed. These questions pertained to program offerings, organizational structure and past changes, budget challenges, student leadership opportunities, and risk management issues were all addressed in the subsequent questions. The key question in each section asked about the top three best practices for each theme. Programming best practices were asked about first. Then, the organizational structure theme asked if there had been any structure changes in the program, and if there was a desire to see some sort of change in organizational structure. Third, the budgeting and financial questions asked for a general overview of the budget structure and the three best practices in budgeting. Student employment and roles in leadership were also questioned. Fifth, the biggest challenges and best practices in risk management questions followed as the last questions about the core themes. The final question asked for one thing that college outdoor recreation programs need to survive and be sustainable. This question was used as a means for other major themes to arise that were not present from the Penn State themes. It was also placed in the survey as a catch-all and a place for respondents to summarize and/or state their most important ideas and feelings. For a full list of survey questions, please see Appendix A. The names and positions of respondents and their respective schools have been eliminated and given pseudonyms for confidentiality.

Analysis

The open-ended responses were addressed through content analysis. Respondents' written responses were recorded electronically and placed into a spreadsheet format. Content analysis involved a review of the data through several steps. Step one was to aggregate the data by question. The data was then coded by word choice, and code repetition was studied. Third, the codes from each question were collected and grouped together. These codes were then discussed with two faculty members to check for validity and that the coding process was done correctly. Fifth, a common coding sheet for each question was created, and the number of times a code was repeated was counted. The number of themes was then

reduced to encapsulate the responses in each of the five pre-established categories. At least one representative sentence was chosen for each theme.

Chapter 3

Results

Description of the Sample

Fourteen different professionals participated in the survey. They represented universities from 13 different states in the Northeast, Southeast and Midwest. However, one individual was removed from the data set because his/her school did not fit the inclusion criteria of a publically-funded school. Therefore, there were 13 usable responses. The longevity of programs spanned a wide range, from 1-43 years old, so the programs represented by professionals ranged from longstanding to new programs and in between. Student affairs departments were represented by seven of the programs. Campus recreation departments were represented six times, and student activities/student life departments were represented four times. The nuances between these terms are the cause for separate codes, even though they are similar, as different departments encompass different responsibilities to provide for students. Tables 3-1 and 3-2 show a range of both program age and program size (by number of students served). The highest number of individuals reported their program be between 1 and 10 years old, with greater than 800 student participants per year.

Table 3-1: Program Age

Program Age by Group	
Age	Number of Respondents
1-10 years	6
11-20 years	2
21-30	2
31-40	2
40+	1

Table 3-2: Students Served

Number of Students Served	
Number of Student Participants	Number of Respondents
1-100	0
101-200	1
201-400	3
401-600	1
601-800	1
800+	7

The mission/goal statements of the programs were similar to one another. Thirteen themes that had more than two repetitions were identified. These themes included relating to academic value, student development, leadership experiences, promotion of health and physical activity, adding to the holistic and

experiential education of students and promoting safety. Other themes included promoting lifelong hobbies, providing opportunities and resources for the community and students, promoting environmental responsibility, and skill development. The wealth of activities offered by these thirteen programs is immense: 29 different outdoor sports/disciplines were represented, with rock climbing, backpacking and kayaking as the most popular activities. Other offerings included a prevalence of day and overnight trip offerings, certification classes, clinics, climbing wall and challenge course facilities and rental programs. While these programs are normally student-centric, 12 out of 13 of the programs provide services/programs to college/university beneficiaries (faculty and staff). Outdoor recreation opportunities are considered a benefit of membership in campus recreation that faculty and staff have access to at five of the schools. Faculty and student interaction and mentorship opportunities were also repeated. Supporting both the university and local surrounding community also arose as reasons why these programs are provided to more than just students. Over half of the professionals provide programs for the local community members. Providing a service, acting as a resource to the community and the unique types of outdoor programming were the most popular reasons for this. Two of the respondents mentioned the community pricing as a way to bring in revenue and to recruit. The importance of community relationships and the positive image of the program and the school were evident reasons for providing programs for both college/university beneficiaries and community members.

After the initial questioning about each program, the survey then focused on the challenges and best practices of different aspects of each program as defined/identified through the exploratory interviews at Penn State (discussed earlier in this thesis). What follows is a summary of the challenges and/or best practices identified by respondents in each of these areas along with the major sub-themes and representative statements for these subthemes.

Programming

Ten themes were identified in individuals' responses to the question, "What are your top three best practices in programming?" They included training, safety, leader development, guidelines of professional organizations, challenge by choice, service, risk management, trip planning procedures, consistency, and gear quality. These themes are located in Table 3-3 and a full listing of all identified sub-themes can be found in Appendix B. The sub-theme of training was the most popular, with eight repetitions. "Select[ing], training and supporting] of quality leaders" is important for Pete when implementing programming at his school, and George echoes this with his mention of "formalized leader training" for his staff. Getting students "into the woods early and often" is Tim's way of developing his student leaders within his program. Training connected the two sub-themes of safety practices and guidelines of professional organizations. Chad's opening suggestion as a best practice was simply: "Safety is always the top priority." The desire to "provide them [the students] with the foundation to learn and experience their personal growth with others in a safe, positive way" was the summation of Don's programming style. Certifications in medical or technical skills constitute guidelines of professional organizations in this element of programming. Joe showed the importance of these trainings to his program through the following statement: "All leaders must have a WFR (Wilderness First Responder) certification and certifications within the skill set (of climbing and paddling)." Brad's program uses training procedures set forth by the Climbing Wall Association (CWA), American Mountain Guide Association (AMGA) and American Canoe Association (ACA). Don's program uses challenge by choice to help his students "grow in an experiential environment." John uses challenge by choice in conjunctions with risk management planning to keep students safe while experiencing the programs he offers. Leading through "servant leadership" is important to Don's program: he believes that "both our student staff and participants will grow and share this world view with others" if they treat leadership like service. Stevie and Ringo's programs incorporate service projects into their adventure programming to connect with students in a different way. "Constant review of risk management" is paramount for Pete. The presence of

risk management planning is a theme that directly relates back to guidelines of professional organizations, as this theme was presented several times by individuals from different schools. Trip planning procedures and gear management and quality were two of the more operational risk practices defined by the respondents. “Clearly defined trip planning and implementation procedures” has led to successful trips for Paul, and Mick’s program relies on pre-trip briefings for students and staff. Stevie’s program uses consistency to aid her student leaders, as they all complete the same new leader training course. Using high quality gear and performing thorough gear checks prior to trips tie back to safety and risk management planning as well. These themes all tie together to represent how these thirteen individuals provide programming to their student population.

Table 3-3: Themes with Two or More Repetitions: Top Three Best Practices in Programming

Code	Number of Appearances
Training	8
Safety	4
Leader Development	4
Guidelines of professional organizations	3
Challenge by Choice	3
Service	3
Risk Management	2
Trip Planning Procedures	2
Consistency	2
Gear Quality	2

Organizational Structure

Staffing structure of the surveyed programs fell along similar lines. Directors, assistant directors and coordinators lead these programs. Four are supported by graduate assistants and two that are supported by interns. Almost all of the thirteen respondents directly stated involvement by student staff and eight reported the involvement of students in management positions. Nine individuals reported that their programs had been through a structural or organizational change in the past. The changes linked to organizational structure did not bring out many clear themes.

Name change within the program was presented multiple times. A question about desired changes for the individual's outdoor program was asked, but not answered by three of the individuals. As for a desired change in organizational structure, adding more professional staff appeared six times. For example, John and Tim would make a change to add "more professional staff" while Stevie and Don would like "a second full-time coordinator position." Paul is looking for consistency in his program and his program is "considering an option to have an Assistant Coordinator position instead of a Program Intern." In contrast, Ringo stated that "we don't especially benefit from having a GA" due to the lack of master's programs aligned with the campus outdoor recreation program, "but we could use more student interns." These changes to staffing were the most common responses to the organizational structure core theme questions. Growing the rental program is important for Pete's program that serves over 20,000 undergraduate students. Mick's young program is looking for policy changes that can more directly involve students in program planning.

Budgeting

Budget structure was similar across the 13 programs. The themes with the most repetition for the questions about budget structure and budget struggles are found in Tables 3-4 and 3-5: please see Appendices C and D for a full listing of all sub-themes for these two questions. Tim simply stated “we don’t struggle” when asked the question about budget struggles faced by the college outdoor recreation program. Yet, every other individual responded with at least one or two things that make funding their programs a challenge. Funding through student recreation and activity fees was present in ten of the responses; while user fees for individual programs and trips and self-generated fees through rentals were present a total of nine times. Don specifically mentioned that his program brings in revenue through the student “bring a friend” program, and Chad charges a slightly higher price for community members to go on trips with his program. Set rates from administrative and departmental budgets were also mentioned by two individuals.

Yet, administration was also mentioned as a budget struggle by two schools. For Brad, “everything must go through the director for approval...but the approval process is very slow and painstaking”. Information about the budget comes slowly from administration for one individual, and another had hopes for a better accounting management system, university-wide. Getting approval from administration is not only a challenge, but proving investment and benefits was also presented as a challenge. Justifying return on investment, especially for gear, was a challenge for Chad. He has to “show that if we buy quality gear that will last, it will pay for itself and more as we rent it out.” Competition from other departments, presented twice, shows that there can be tension in regards to gathering funding from within a university. As Pete described: “We have great fitness, IM, etc. programs, [yet they] all want a piece of the pie for themselves.” Ringo provided an example of proving return on investment: “It is

difficult to compare a 10 day field based program with 10 students to a fitness class with 100 students.”

These individuals are aware of all of the offerings of a large public institution and are looking for ways to navigate through the respective administrative challenges. Transportation, a theme that was present in many different question responses was also presented twice as a budgeting struggle. “Overpriced and limiting transportation through the university” is Stevie’s struggle with funding and transportation. Don’s program has access to one vehicle, but needs another to support the growth of trip programming. Making student wages fair is also a challenge for these programs. Chad and Ringo both stated that their student wages were a challenge, as Chad “can’t have longer hours during the week” because his budget for paying staff is low.

Suggestions for things to know about alleviating budget struggles were very unique amongst respondents. More planning, accounting systems, and navigating the politics of student fee allocation were all suggestions for changing from an administrative level. Finding funding for grants was a repeated theme, as well as charting growth and more insight into trends. The funding questions were left intentionally vague to help limit the presence of sensitive information. Yet, they still yielded results that can be analyzed for methods of best practice.

Table 3-4: Themes with Two or More Repetitions: Budget Structure

Code	Number of Appearances
Student Recreation Fee (allocation)	10
Self-Generated Fees (rentals, trips)	9
Administration-determined budget	2
Set Amount/Flat Fee	2
Fees from outside users (other departments, outside groups)	2

Table 3-5: Themes with Two or More Repetitions: Budget Struggles

Code	Number of Appearances
Need for more funding	3
Administrative Issues	2
Justifying Return on Investment	2
Student Wages	2
Competition Between Departments	2
Transportation Costs	2

Student Leadership

Student leadership was a concept that resonated throughout all of the key informant exploratory interviews at Penn State. Students not only engage in programs, but engage in making decisions for their group. These decisions are made amongst peers and with college/university staff at Penn State. The worry that student leadership is lost with the move from student club to institutional/school, university-led programs was presented throughout interviews with stakeholders from PSOC and Club Sports. Yet, when asked about student leadership, all respondents mentioned some kind of student leadership. There were eleven total sub-themes from the question “what type of student leadership does your outdoor orientation program offer?” All of the sub-themes can be found in Appendix E; the major sub-themes are listed in Table 3-6. Students develop not only through trip experiences, but also through employment. This was a pertinent theme presented by many of the surveyed individuals. Student-led trips were mentioned by nearly all of the respondents. The types of trips led were mentioned in the description of the sample and feature boating, climbing and hiking trips amongst others. Differentiation in levels of group leaders exists at several programs. George’s program has trip leaders and coordinators, while Don uses team leaders and

trip guides. Student-led activities like climbing walls, challenge courses and teambuilding programs were mentioned by seven individuals. Ringo specifically mentioned his student staff working as teambuilding facilitators, while Brad's students "operate and manage the climbing wall." Manager positions, in front line service areas (like rental offices) and at activity areas/programs (like climbing walls and challenge courses) also mentioned by eight respondents. Training was mentioned six times, and Brad, Glenn and Tim all mentioned the fact that their student leaders are trained in all aspects of their programs, not just rentals or trips. Glenn's student leaders have training as all of the following: "trip leaders, challenge course facilitators, climbing wall instructors, bike mechanics, rental equipment clerks, and academic instructors." Working in the rental office and taking trip registrations were considered money handling, as most programs mentioned some sort of user fee for trips, rentals or both. Opportunities to received industry certifications (like AMGA and WFR trainings) as well as money-handling skills were mentioned six and five times, respectively. For example, one respondent noted that his/her school even provides a student development fund enabling student leaders to fund their certification training.

The prevalence of student leadership in collegiate outdoor adventure and recreation programs bodes well for fostering student engagement, but the desire for more student oversight in trip leading was expressed by two different schools. In Brad's program, "A professional staff currently joins the students on all trips, but we are working towards making that aspect of the program completely led and managed by students as well." Mick's student staff are "not permitted to offer any programming that is not directly supervised;" and "if there is one thing [he] could change, it would be this model." Keeping students involved keeps the program relevant at many of the respondent schools, but the ways to go about it are varied. Incorporating student into front-line programming is beneficial at many of the programs surveyed, but there is still room to grow in the eyes of some individuals. Yet, students are engaged at many levels of programming. This engagement and input of students into adventure programming can also increase the need for risk management. Keeping students safe while on trips or doing specific activities provided by outdoor recreation programs is of utmost importance.

Table 3-6: Themes with Two or More Repetitions: Types of Student Leadership Offered

Code	Number of Appearances
Student-led trips	11
Climbing Wall/Challenge Course/Teambuilding Facilitation	7
Manager Positions	6
Training	5
Money Handling	5
Certifications	3

Risk Management

Risk management, as previously described, is the minimization of harm and liability through planning. Using risk management in all aspects of outdoor programming, especially for mitigating lawsuits, is becoming the national standard (Attarian, 2001). Repeated themes for the top three risk management issues and the top three best practices in risk management can be found in Tables 3-7 and 3-8. The entirety of sub-theme responses to the risk management questions can be found in Appendices F and G. When respondents were asked about their top three risk management struggles, the overwhelming response was the risk in driving and transporting participants. Meeting age and driving record requirements are one factor that limits student staff when driving. Mick sees that his program has a “lack of respect for van training,” while Pete sees that his students do not have the “longitudinal experience base (i.e. years of experience)” that professional staff have. Safety while on the road was another aspect of the driving that concerns some individuals. Mick provided an example that “Driving in rush hour traffic is far more dangerous than skydiving [due to the amount of risk management planning done by recreational skydiving providers] but the wrong activity is prohibited.” Tim and Chad both provide vehicle training created for their specific programs, while Glenn uses a third party to help standardize his

driving training. Weather was mentioned three times, but not described in detail by the respondents. Paperwork and forms were an issue for three individuals. This administrative barrier can relate back to the challenges seen with the core theme of budgeting. One school “does not allow students to sign individual waivers when participating in a University sponsored program/activity...limiting to what types of programming [the outdoor recreation program] can offer.” Another school has a “legal department not wanting us to collect medical information because of legal exposure.” Yet John specifically mentioned the involvement of “a very supportive Risk [Management] office on campus,” which was one of few positive comments about administrative involvement in risk management. These administrative problems can influence the staffing and programming risk management issues that follow. George has “a student coordinator set the tone and compile learning;” yet “generating maturity” and skill or judgment competencies in student staff was presented as a challenge. This was perceived to have ramifications for risk. Therefore, making sure professional staff has the knowledge to use their judgment was identified. Mick was frank in his opinion of staff judgment: “There is nothing more effective than having a trained and intelligent person with the authority to make an effective decision. I do my best to allow flexibility and decision making in the field.”

The best practices in risk management presented ten repeated themes, all with between two and four repetitions, showing that there are many common ways to manage the aforementioned risks. Following industry standards in trainings and using curriculum from credible outside sources were two suggestions. Glenn’s program “use[s] outside organizations’ curriculums and certifications, while Stevie’s program uses “emergency itineraries and first aid certifications;” both are common throughout the outdoor recreation industry to manage risk (Attarian, 2001). Paul “maintain[s] safe and effective gear & equipment” and Mick uses a “rigorous equipment maintenance schedule” to manage risk through equipment management. “Mak[ing] sure [your student leaders] know that you care about them, need them and will help them” and challenging his employees is how Pete provides mentorship. Trip planning procedures are just as important as leader training for Paul’s program. Driver training was woven in with

many of the other training responses as topic that professionals spend time on to help minimize the risk, as described earlier in this section. Professional staff on trips is mandatory for Mick’s program. Yet, other programs do not have this mandate and still look to professional staff to help with judgment calls. Pete stresses the importance of “pick[ing] the right people! Not the ‘hot shots’, not the wanna bes, but young people with a passion to learn and share.” George looks to “create a culture of feedback... [and] have reasonable policies and flexible, principle-based procedure[s] in place.” Pete “clarifies the goals of the program... we teach fundamental skills, not advanced techniques.” He stresses that “it is important to work in your scope of practice.” Incorporating feedback and setting goals are several ways that interpersonal skills and overall program planning are used to manage risk. Incorporating professional staff and using mentorship were two more ways that respondents use their position as college/university administrators to manage their risk through their staff. These risk management practices are interwoven and no one individual relies on just one practice. Risk management is paramount to these respondents, and all of them provided thorough answers on how they keep students safe.

Table 3-7: Themes with Two or More Repetitions: Top Three Struggles in Risk Management

Code	Number of Appearances
Driver Training/Vehicular Risk	8
Training	6
Weather	4
Forms/Paperwork	3
Communication	2
Legal Exposure	2
Professional Staff Judgment	2
Policies/Procedures	2

Table 3-8: Themes with Two or More Repetitions: Top Three Best Practices in Risk Management

Code	Number of Repetitions
Training/Outside curriculum	6
First aid certifications	4
Gear inspection	3
Program Goals/feedback	3
Trip planning	3
Driving training	3
Professional staff on trips	2
Industry Standards	2
Mentoring	2
Outside curriculum	2

What do College Outdoor Recreation Programs Need to Do to Survive and Thrive?

This survey could not nearly capture all of the challenges faced by collegiate outdoor recreation programs and serve as forum for assessing *all* of the best practices for handling such challenges.

Therefore, the last question was used to broaden the scope of survey questions and allow respondents to introduce new or overlooked major themes. The hope was to summarize these additional themes into a few statements of best practice, and provide final commentary. College outdoor recreation programs are complex, as can be seen by the variety and depth of the answers provided in the rest of the survey questions. Condensing such information into just a few sentences was an important part of this last question, yet presented a unique challenge for the respondents. Every respondent answered: some with very detailed answers and new ideas, but most with a summation of their previous ideas. The repeated

themes can be found in Table 3-9 and the full table of sub-themes is listed in Appendix H. Incorporating student leadership and keeping the program “student centered” was identified five times. Tim opened his final remarks by stating “Students, students and students. This is their program... without them we as professionals would not have jobs.” “Tell our story!” was an enthusiastic opening statement to the question from Pete. Relating to the academic mission of each respondent’s particular college or university was the most prevalent sub-theme, with five repetitions. Brad wants his program to “speak the language of academics,” while George wants to market the value of his program to stakeholders. Staying financially responsible and managing fees was also presented. Joe stressed “fiscal responsibility” which relates back to the budget struggles and best practices mentioned earlier. Safety, as in earlier questions, was mentioned several times as a paramount part of any outdoor recreation program. Diversity and the push for creative programming were presented three times in this question. Diversity was mentioned once or twice in the programming question responses, and with its repetition in this final question, it can be surmised that is a potential missed theme. Ringo is looking to “reach out to more non-traditional users” and Paul stated that keeping “safety and accessibility of programs to a diverse range of students” was a key takeaway. Research and assessment, as well as trends, were only touched upon in one or two answers from earlier in the survey, so it could be considered a new implication to be added to the five core themes along with diversity. All thirteen programs were diligent about their responses, and they all seem hopeful that these kinds of programs will survive. The suggestions presented here are simply the building blocks for presenting methods of best practice, as discussed in the next section.

Table 3-9: Themes with Two or More Repetitions: The Main Thing College Outdoor Recreation Programs Need to Survive (and Thrive) in the Future

Code	Number of Appearances
Student Leader Development/Engagement	5
Connecting with academic mission/telling the story of the program	3
Self-Sustaining Fees/Fiscal Responsibility	3
Safety and Risk Management	3
Diversity	2

Chapter 4

Discussion & Conclusion

This research study brought together data from thirteen schools and tried to make sense of vastly different programs operating across the United States. The scope of this thesis is delimited to these specific large, public universities, but may be applicable at other universities of varying size/composition nationwide. As the outdoor recreation industry at college campuses grows, individuals who work for these programs are seeking more help in the administration and management of their programs and activities. Results from this study are not an exhaustive list of problems and the best practices by which to solve them: rather, it sets the foundation for future research. Yet, the concept of a best practice may be a hard goal to reach. The outdoor recreation industry is very situational: every trip is different when it comes to the participants, the leadership, the scenario or activity, and even the weather and the events of the day. All of these factors go into the decision-making and process of planning a trip, and transcend into the administration of the overarching program and the professional staff. Therefore, the term “best” is used to imply that, in most situations, said practice would be the most correct answer. Yet, to work off of best practice, they are often modified and implemented as good or smart practices. For the explanation of the results from this study, the term best practices will still be used. The major findings detailed below seek to bring together some of the best practices mentioned in the throughout the results section of this survey and meld them with sources of evidence from outdoor recreation industry in collegiate setting. In the end, it is hoped that such information will help college outdoor recreation programs serve students more efficiently and effectively.

Major Findings

The core theme of programming was associated with the most sub-themes, 23, and had the most written content of any of the questions. This shows that programming is a main concern for the respondents. As they are practitioners, explaining what kind of programming they do occurs very often, so respondents can answer these questions in great detail. The theme of risk management was presented with 17 sub-themes and also had a large amount of written content. This shows that the respondents put effort into planning around the risks inherent with outdoor programming. Programming and risk management transcended other major findings and will be analyzed further in this section. These seemed to be the two themes that created the most commentary and discussion, while budgeting suggestions and structure change were themes that garnered the least amount of discussion. Programming is what outdoor programs are known for, yet these types of programs do not hold a strong presence in academic literature (Bentley, 2003). They are not the subjects of rigorous evaluation research in peer-reviewed literature. Yet, the study of outdoor recreation programs on college campuses is a growing segment in the field of outdoor/adventure education research (Bell, 2006). The themes identified here may not be exhaustive, but they represent a starting point from which to further explore outdoor recreation program at colleges and universities. The elaboration of these themes is crucial, as a simple one word or phrase does not show the depth to which each respondent described their feelings about each question. The two sub-themes with the most cross over between the five categories were training and transportation. This shows how important these two things are to professionals in collegiate outdoor recreation programs, as they appear in several aspects of their programs. Student leadership, relevancy and diversity followed as the most important takeaways from the survey results. Through the analysis of these results, implications at college campuses nationwide can be drawn.

Training

Every single respondent mentioned staff training at least once. Current practices of training, using training as risk management, desire for more training and funds to do so, lack of training held by student leaders, mentorship by professional and academic staff and using training for students were all presented. Training student staff to make independent and use better decision-making was mentioned, yet specific advice for such training was not discussed in-depth. Using training to develop student leaders was also mentioned, through in-house staff trainings and profession guidelines and trainings. Developing student staff through mentorship (by peers and by professional staff) was also mentioned as a best practice. Using knowledge that is held by senior student and professional staff can help students learn in a more personal way, and the possibility for one-on-one learning opportunities then exists. Students learn when they lead, as they are then in charge and can hold ownership of the experience and feel the senses of engagement that were discussed in the Introduction. Yet, specific leadership training programs or theories were not discussed. This mentorship is often provided by staff with extensive experience, both in the field and in the classroom. The AORE membership has also indicated that graduate assistants and graduate-level educated staff are important resources to provide professional expertise, mentorship and quality training opportunities. This current state of affairs has yet to be researched in-depth, but an anecdotal review of current programs suggests the value of higher education in implementing college outdoor recreation programs. Incorporating certifications and industry/professional guidelines with in-house, specific training programs can enhance training. Using senior student staff to help new staff learn the ins-and-outs of paperwork, registration and other task-oriented goals allows mentors to practice teaching and gives professional staff time to work on other teachings. Risk management and decision-making should be done with guidance from a professional, as the respondents presented professional judgment as an expectation. It is not something that can be taught in a day, but mentored to a student leader throughout their time with the outdoor recreation program. If professional staff invest time and effort into their trainings and elicit

dedication and buy-in from student staff, training can be used to mold good leaders and provide great programs.

Transportation

Driving is, in many cases, the most feasible way to transport participants to outdoor recreation sites and programs. Multiple schools mentioned transportation as a risk management and budgeting issue. The importance of driver training was made paramount, but the training has little effectiveness if it is not taken seriously. One respondent specifically mentioned the lack of respect for the van training by his staff. Some programs did not mention any driver training at all. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has long cautioned drivers about the dangers of driving large vehicles, especially 15-passenger vans. Yet, vans or other large vehicles are often the only way for college outdoor recreation programs to get their participants and leaders to program sites. Statistics on crashes by large vans show that losing control of the vehicle is a common way to cause an accident (NTSB, 2006). Therefore, the NTSB suggests additional training to learn how a van handles differently than a regular car. This training can range from online testing to in-vehicle practice to a full training by a third-party driver training company. Justifying the importance of driving training is important to secure the time and funding for professionals to actually provide this training to their staff. Once the drivers are trained, securing the vehicles is another challenge that some schools face. Different schools charge for their transportation costs differently, whether or not the outdoor recreation program owns a vehicle, if the school provides one for them, or even if participants drive themselves. Charging a rental fee and/or a mileage/gas fee are ways that programs may have to pay for their transportation. Dedicating specific transportation funds is one best practice to securing means to provide off-site programming. In order to justify a change in transportation policies or practices to administration, a proposal detailing the costs and benefits of providing transportation, as well as the driver training that will take place would be a best practice for program

professionals to try. The key to getting the most out of it is investigating the different kinds of training that best fit the needs of the situation and the staff. Transportation issues were common amongst the individuals surveyed here, so examples of successful driver programs at colleges and universities should be shared. Successful programs can serve as models of best practice for other programs and help get students outside!

Student Leadership and Engagement

A major finding from this thesis is that, while universities have shifted to a professional program model, opportunities for student engagement and leadership have remained. For example, every single program surveyed in this study employed students in some form, and almost 50% mentioned that students are offered the opportunity to hold manager or administrative positions. Astin's Theory of Involvement (1999) coincides with the answers supplied by the respondent pool. This theory takes both physical and mental challenges and brings them together, just as outdoor programs do by incorporating student development through outdoor activities. Students who devote a high degree of physical and mental involvement to an activity show that the student is more involved in that activity than an activity that takes low physical and mental effort. This can be directly applied to an outdoor trip activity, such as backpacking or rock climbing (two of the most common activities provided by the respondents' programs): both activities take a high amount of physical effort (moving up a rock wall, hiking, being outside in the elements) as well as mental energy (following and protecting a climbing route, navigating through a forest, managing student participants etc.). The ability for students to work into leadership and management roles bodes well for their personal and professional development while building the experience needed to make good decisions while leading outdoor trips. As mentioned in the training section, students' "learning through leading" is a great way to get them to develop their technical and leadership skills. Some of the surveyed professionals stated that students are involved in many factions of

a given outdoor program, from rentals to climbing walls and trips. This engages students on multiple levels and helps develop their skill sets. Therefore, a best practice would be to allow students to work in multiple departments within the outdoor recreation program. Also, this practice could extend and incorporate the importance of letting students lead other staff in these programs as student managers. With this responsibility placed on students, professional staff recognized the value of these positions to their programs. Several respondents stated a desire for an increase student wages and training budgets to show the importance and dedication to quality, engaged student staff.

The question then becomes, what are these students leading and managing? What are they directing their energy to? Results from the current study suggest that students are leaders on the front line interfacing with participants. In other words, they are the ones leading trips, working and managing challenge courses and rock climbing walls and working in the rental office. Policy decisions and big picture leadership are two factors that were not mentioned as areas where students are making final decisions. Conversely, under the club model, club officers are given the freedom to make final decisions, pending the approval of an adviser. In the guided/school model, the professional, paid staff commonly is working with university officials and administration to make these decisions. To what degree is the university exposed to risk when students make decisions? When will the professional staff make decisions? And is this acceptable? What is missed when students aren't in positions of long range planning power? These questions would provide a deeper scope of the engagement of students in long-term planning at collegiate outdoor recreation programs. Yet the data from this survey is not sufficient to provide answers to these questions. The best practices that can be gathered from this survey indicate that keeping students at the forefront of programming is effective and engages students in a positive way. The evidence of emphasis on student staff and management leads the reader to understand the scope of this practice at the thirteen schools surveyed. The importance of keeping students involved is paramount, but the following section takes this a step further and shows that programs need to be relevant not only to students, but also to the administration and school as a whole.

Relevancy and Importance to the College/University

Another major finding is that programs want to be seen as central to the university student experience. Proving the academic value of the outdoor recreation program and adding to the experiential/holistic educational experience were two strong themes from the mission statements of the surveyed programs. Showing the return on investment was seen as a programming challenge and goal by two different programs. Outdoor recreation programs show their return on investment by provision of outdoor activities to a student population that otherwise would not have access to them. This ties to the comment by one individual that his school looks to provide a safe and fun activity in a small, rural college town. Yet, programs need to show their return on investment also by how engaged a student can be in the program. Universities then must take stock of the other recreational program offerings across their respective campuses and making it known that their program is worth keeping. Outdoor recreation programs must then show how they are engaging students on more than just the surface, entertainment level, through skill intensive activities provided for a length of time. This can equate their outdoor experience (offered to a small amount of students at one time) with a possibly less-enriching experience that can be offered to more students. An example of this is a backpacking trip versus a fitness class. A backpacking trip may only reach 10 students while the fitness class can reach 100, but the engagement factors of success, curiosity, originality and success may be felt in a different way. Feelings of belonging and a sense of friendship and connection can be made on outdoor trips, as documented by Bell (2006) and others. This help students connect to the school that they attend, because they have investment in the people and experiences provided to them by this particular college or university outdoor program. This is the kind of engagement that may not happen to students who spend one hour in a gym, versus several nights on a trail or a day on a lake. Student engagement is at the forefront of the university bulletin at several of the universities studied, including Penn State. This drive towards engaged scholarship not only benefits the students by creating cross-curricular experiences and out-of-classroom learning, it also makes the university as a whole stand apart with unique programs (Penn State, 2014). Therefore, relating

outdoor programming to cross-curricular and experiential education may help outdoor recreation programs to stay relevant to the college/university programs as a whole. Involving students and providing enriching experiences can bring about the positive responses that may help an outdoor recreation program stay in business and possibly even grow their offerings.

Program and Participant Diversity

There are two types of diversity that were presented in the survey findings. The first was the desire to diversify programming and expand programs to incorporate different outdoor activities. The second was the desire to appeal to non-traditional outdoor recreationists, such as ethnic minorities and those new to outdoor pursuits. Another major finding was that services provided by collegiate outdoor recreation programs are diverse and cover many different activity specialties. The sheer number of sports represented in the programming survey, and the extent to which programs plan and manage their trips and rental programs shows the dedication to providing many different types of recreational experiences to students. Many schools do similar things in terms of activity, yet each one is unique in their direct offerings. Statements in the programming and budgeting questions alluded to the desire that some individuals have to expand and match activities provided by other colleges. The most common change in budgeting was, as could have been predicted, a desire for more money to actually implement these different kinds of programs. The desire for non-traditional users and the push for new, diverse participant audience are also present. As of 2012, 70% of outdoor recreationists were Caucasian, and 25% of outdoor recreation participants were non-working students. (Outdoor Foundation, 2013). Yet the demographics of the populations served by college outdoor recreation programs in the U.S. may not match these statistics. Students at large, public universities may represent many different racial and ethnic backgrounds, have limited outdoor recreational experience and prior knowledge, or be pursuing a part- or full-time job while in college. Several programs mentioned reaching out to non-users and looking to expand the reach of their

programming to larger audiences. Diversifying student participants and leaders as well as program offering can serve as a best practice for many different kinds of schools. Yet, the importance of maintaining the quality of current programs was not lost on the survey respondents, and striving to work efficiently was a point that other programs could take into account as a caveat to the practice of continually expanding programs and participants.

Limitations

This study is limited by the scope of qualifying universities chosen based on a desire to maintain their consistency with the exploratory research setting (e.g., Penn State). Future assessments of smaller, private universities may be warranted. Only thirteen schools were surveyed, and there are numerous colleges and universities across the United States with some kind of outdoor recreation programming (Attarian, 2001; Bell 2010). The scope was limited to large, public universities, but many smaller, private schools, like Prescott College and Dartmouth University, have longstanding, high-functioning outdoor programming as well (Bell 2006). Therefore, the picture of collegiate outdoor recreation programs and their offerings is incomplete. Another limitation is the questioning style of this survey. Data was collected through an online survey and therefore had limitations of time and respondent commitment to providing answers. This study could also be conducted in a more in-depth style, meaning that interviews with the professionals from other schools could have been done over the phone, audio recorded and then transcribed for themes. This style may provide more depth to the answers and elicit more themes to be added to the five core themes of programming, organizational structure, budgeting, student leadership and risk management. Follow-up phone interviews subsequent to the online survey could have been used to help substantiate or elaborate on survey responses and provide a more complete picture of each individual program. When analyzing structure changes, it is important to look not only at the professionals, but also at those that work above (administration) and below (student staff) the program coordinators/directors to

see how changes affect multiple stakeholders. Interviewing administrators from Penn State as well as from other schools could help answer more of the “why” questions. Why questions might include: “Why is the program run in this specific way?” and “Why was there a change?” No undergraduate students were represented by the thirteen respondents, so the student perspective was only talked about from the viewpoint of the professional staff who answered the questions. Future studies should survey the student staff of these programs to compare their perceived engagement and involvement with the perception of the professional staff that employ them. Even with these limitations, results from this study still offer a window into the state of affairs at select collegiate outdoor recreation programs in the U.S and provide insights in how their practices can influence other individuals, outdoor programs or colleges/universities. The influence on student participants and leaders can also be expanded upon and studied. Further, as mentioned before, best practices are trumped by situational influence and decision-making. Therefore, a survey of best practices is theoretical, and can only be applied when the situation deems it fitting. This can be a challenge for outdoor recreation professionals, yet it can also help them find a baseline off of which to make their decisions in the areas of programming, organizational structure, budgeting, student leadership and risk management.

CONCLUSION

The implications for this research can be widespread throughout the AORE and IOCA communities, as well as general university recreation and student engagement literature and practices. Creating best practices can advance this growing industry and help better prepare for the future (Attarian, 2001). Research in outdoor adventure programs can help direct programming and optimize the experience for the student participant (Bentley, 2003). The need for research and formal benchmarking is crucial in this field. The survival of college outdoor recreation programs relies on program relevancy within the student population and the proven value to the school as a whole. Outdoor recreation programmers are providing quality trips, clinics, activities and events to thousands of student across the country. This field is one that is deeply rooted in experiential learning and hands-on delivery of services. Yet, passion in the management of these kinds of programs helps keep those deep roots alive. Creating best practices can help programmers, management and higher-level administration work together to keep the mission, goals and values of outdoor recreation programs at the forefront of everything they do. Then, through the implementation of best practices, these programs can learn and grow and continue to provide quality programming and enrich the college/university experience for students across the United States.

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Appendix A: Best Practices in Collegiate Outdoor Recreation Survey Text

You are being invited to participate in a research study. The results from this study will be used as the basis for an undergraduate honors thesis. Themes from this survey will then be analyzed and your response will be used to identify challenges, priorities and best practices for managing collegiate outdoor recreation programs. This survey contains 25 questions and, depending on the nature of your program, will take anywhere from 15-30 minutes to complete. Your participation implies your voluntary consent to participate in the research and you may exit the survey at any time. If you have questions or concerns, you should contact the Principle Investigator, Christina Spohn at (724) 719-8814. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject or concerns regarding your privacy, you may contact the Penn State Office for Research Protections at (814) 865-1775. If you agree to participate, click the blue button at the bottom right to continue.

The following questions will ask you about the collegiate outdoor recreation service provider that you are affiliated with. This should be a campus recreation program or club, not an academic department or college. If your program incorporates an outdoor orientation program you may reference it, but the focus is on academic-year outdoor recreation programs or clubs. Please answer these questions to the extent of your knowledge about the program you are affiliated with.

1. Name of your college/university
2. Name/Title of your outdoor recreation program
3. In which department or unit within your college/university is your program housed?
(Example: Student Affairs, Student Life, Athletics)
4. How many years has your program been in existence?
5. What is the mission statement of your outdoor recreation program? If you do not have one, what are your program's core goals/objectives?

This next set of questions will ask about the programming provided by your outdoor recreation program.

6. What types of programs does your outdoor recreation program offer?
7. How many student participants do you have in your programs annually? If unsure, please provide your best estimate.
 - 1-100
 - 101-200
 - 201-400
 - 401-600
 - 601-800
 - 800+
8. Besides students, do you provide programs for other college/university beneficiaries, like faculty, staff or family members?
 - Yes
 - No
9. If yes, why do you provide these types of programs to beneficiaries?

10. Do you provide programs for individuals outside of the college/university system (e.g. community members)?
- Yes
 - No
11. If yes, why do you provide these programs to individuals outside of the college/university system?
12. Please describe/discuss the top three best practices your program uses in its programming.

This next section looks at the structure (e.g. staffing, organization) of your outdoor recreation program. You may reference past and present structure.

13. How is your program structured/organized?
14. Has there ever been a name or structure change in your program?
- Yes
 - No
15. If yes, please describe the past changes in your program.
16. Would you change anything about the structure of your program?
- Yes
 - No
17. If yes, what would that change be?

The next few questions ask specifically about the budget/financial framework of your outdoor recreation program.

18. Briefly describe your outdoor recreation program's budget structure (e.g. from where your program receives funding)
19. What are three struggles your program faces in regards to your funding?
20. What is one thing you would want to know more about to alleviate these budgeting or financial struggles?

These questions ask about student leadership in your outdoor recreation program.

21. Do you employ students?
 - Yes
 - No
22. What type of student leadership does your outdoor recreation program offer? Please provide examples.

You are nearing the end of the survey. Thank you for your patience and thoughtful answers! There are just three questions left.

These questions ask about the risk management decisions made by the managers of your outdoor recreation program.

23. What are the top three risk management issues that have an impact on your program?
24. Please describe/discuss the top three best practices you believe your program uses in risk management.

25. Finally, and most importantly, what is the main thing that the collegiate outdoor recreation programs need to focus on if they want to survive (and thrive) in the future?

Thank you very much for your time. Your participation will help further the management of outdoor recreation programs at colleges and universities across the country. The results of this study will be made available to AORE members in 2015. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:
Principal Investigator, Christina Spohn cls5750@psu.edu

Appendix B: Coded Themes: Top Three Best Practices in Programming

Code Number	Code	Number of Appearances
3	Training	8
2	Safety	4
10	Leader Development	4
1	Guidelines of professional organizations	3
12	Challenge by Choice	3
17	Service	3
9	Risk Management	2
11	Trip Planning Procedures	2
20	Consistency	2
23	Gear Quality	2
4	Customer service	1
5	Fun	1
6	Educational	1
8	Leader Selection	1
13	Feedback	1
14	Variety	1
15	Epi-Pen	1
16	Satellite Phone	1
18	Greatness	1
19	Special Events	1
21	Leave No Trace	1
22	Small Group size	1

Appendix C: Coded Themes: Budget Structure

Code Number	Code	Number of Appearances
1	Student Recreation Fee (allocation)	10
2	Self-Generated Fees (rentals, trips)	9
3	Administration-determined budget	2
4	Set Amount/Flat Fee	2
5	Fees from outside users (other departments, outside groups)	2
6	State funding	1

Appendix D: Coded Themes: Struggles Programs Face in Regards to Funding

Code Number	Code	Number of Appearances
3	Need for more funding	3
2	Administrative Issues	2
4	Justifying Return on Investment	2
5	Student Wages	2
7	Competition Between Departments	2
12	Transportation Costs	2
1	Creating a baseline budget	1
6	Unsuccessful Fee Increase	1
8	Predicting Yearly Contributions	1
9	Consistency	1
10	Budget Structure	1
11	Need to Increase Programming	1

Appendix E: Coded Themes: Types of Student Leadership Offered by Outdoor Recreation Programs

Code Number	Code	Number of Appearances
2	Student-led trips	11
7	Climbing Wall/Challenge Course/Teambuilding Facilitation	7
4	Manager Positions	6
8	Training	5
10	Money Handling	5
3	Certifications	3
1	Special funding	1
5	Coursework	1
6	Special Event Planning	1
9	Teamwork	1
11	Special Skill (bike mechanic)	1

Appendix F: Coded Themes: Top Three Struggles in Risk Management

Code Number	Code	Number of Appearances
7	Driver Training/Vehicular Risk	8
4	Training	6
15	Weather	4
5	Forms/Paperwork	3
11	Communication	2
11	Legal Exposure	2
3	Professional Staff Judgment	2
2	Policies/Procedures	2
1	Worker's Compensation	1
14	Definition of Risk	1
13	Job Responsibilities/Focus	1
12	Field Injuries	1
9	Lack of Professional Staff/ Student Staff Inexperience	1
8	Industry Trends	1
6	Inexperienced Student Participants	1

Appendix G: Coded Themes: Top Three Best Practices in Risk Management

Code Number	Code	Number of Appearances
4	Training/outside curriculum	6
7	First aid certifications	4
15	Driving training	3
11	Trip planning	3
9	Program goals/feedback	3
6	Gear inspection	3
5	Mentoring	2
2	Industry Standards	2
1	Professional staff on trips	2
18	Weather monitoring	1
17	Decision making	1
16	Hiring outside guides	1
14	Satellite phone use	1
13	All staff work trips	1
12	Campus risk management office	1
10	Incident reports	1
8	Staff recruiting	1
3	Land use laws	1

Appendix H: Coded Themes: The Main Thing College Outdoor Recreation Programs Need to Survive (and Thrive) in the Future

Code Number	Code	Number of Appearances
8	Student Leader Development/Engagement	5
1	Connecting with academic mission/telling the story of the program	3
3	Self-Sustaining Fees/Fiscal Responsibility	3
7	Safety and Risk Management	3
6	Diversity	2
2	Research/Assessment	1
4	Treat as a Serious Program	1
5	Share Benefits with Other Programs	1
9	Industry Trends	1
10	Technology	1
11	Sharing benefits	1
12	Gaining constituents	1
13	Quality	1
14	Leave No Trace	1

ACADEMIC VITA

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