

Outdoor Activities Section to the RSOP Staff Handbook

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OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

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This area is composed of a “core” group of volunteer staff members who are an integral portion of planning and implementing programs. Emphasis is to offer activities which cater to the needs of UMD students and community members. These activities range from skiing to canoeing, plus special evening presentations and weekend trips. These programs are intended to provide as many different kinds of outdoor skill activities as possible. Thus, they are not limited to kayaking and climbing. To make them accessible to UMD students we have designed them to be inexpensive and short duration activities that do not place high time or cost demands on students.

Included within this department are a number of major project areas: Operation of Superior National Forest campgrounds, student and teacher training at Stowe Environmental Elementary School, curriculum development, short-term environmental education activities for local school children, working with UMD's Center for Environmental Education, cooperative ventures with local and regional environmental education centers, and courses for credit.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the volunteer staff program is to develop leaders in education through active participation in outdoor programming involving an interactive and enjoyable environment.

OBJECTIVES

The mission will be accomplished by achieving the following (in rank order):

- learn how to effectively educate
- develop leadership skills
- learn both “hard” and “soft” skills related to outdoor education
- gain the skills for responsible treatment of the environment
- meet people and have fun in the outdoors

POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

Volunteer Staff

Participation in the volunteer staff is open to anyone interested. Responsibilities include:

- Participate in Calendar Programs, Volunteer Staff Meetings, and other development opportunities (must participate in 3 Outdoor Program Events per semester and all volunteer staff meetings - every other week)

- Show initiative in communicating with other staff. Become involved in program development and completion through the following developmental sequence:
 1. Attend and observe veteran staff conduct outdoor activities
 2. Assist in planning and instruction for a Calendar Program
 3. Co-instruct an outdoor activity
 4. Instruct “solo” (if this is appropriate for the specific activity)

Core Volunteer Staff

The Core Staff are members of the volunteer staff who take on more of an administrative role. Initial involvement is through invitation by current Core Staff (a person is invited when they show exceptional commitment and there is a need for additional Core Staff).

Core Staff:

- Are a resource for other members of the Volunteer Staff - primarily in helping in the execution of Calendar Programs
- Communicate with Volunteer Staff mentor groups regularly
- Help facilitate Volunteer Staff meetings (every other week)
- Coordinate the creation, development, and implementation of Calendar Programs/other events - this includes program write-ups, lesson plan development, and delivery of Programs.
- Provide feedback to program instructors.
- Participate in scheduled Core Staff meetings
- Facilitate learning of new aspects of outdoor education via quotes, articles, ideas, etc. brought to meetings.
- Instruct outdoor activities.

Core Staff Mentoring - Ideas on what this really means:

The purpose of mentoring is to connect each and every volunteer staff to person who is experienced in working with the Outdoor Program to help them on their journey of working and learning with the OP. The hope is that the journey is smooth and understandable.

Remember, the quality and depth of the volunteer staff rests in your ability to communicate with your mentees regularly and help them understand the OP.

Things that you can do to help this along:

- Get volunteers involved in shadowing programs - directly invite individuals to participate in specific programs

- Learn about your mentees - get to know them, find out what they want in life or from the OP, help them find their niche in the OP. Make sure they complete their goals sheet and know what is on it. Work with Tim & the Volunteer Staff Coordinator to meet their needs.
- Be a familiar face to your mentees - find out who they are at the meetings or set up meetings outside of the volunteer meetings to meet them. Go out of your way so they know who you are.
- Stop and TALK with them in the hallway and find out what they are up to, how they are doing,...
- Keep them posted about what is going on - meetings, workshops, announcements on the staff bulletin board,... Do this at minimum via e-mail. Phone or in-person are even better. Phone messages are a bad plan.
- Pre-program and post-program check-in with instructors that are your mentees. It is your responsibility to check with your mentees that are teaching upcoming programs. Start this well in advance of the program. Follow the program planning check-list.

Volunteer Staff Coordinator

The Volunteer Staff Coordinator strives to create and maintain a cohesive Volunteer Staff who deliver high quality Calendar Programs. The Coordinator will:

- Ensure that lesson plans and risk assessment forms are on file prior to each calendar activity
- Maintain regular contact with Core Staff members to help ensure they are communicating with Volunteer Staff Members. If Core members need help during stress times, Coordinator will help.
- Ensure that someone (either core staff or staff coordinator) checks in with each Calendar Program instructor to see how their program went within 1 day of the program.
- Coordinate long range planning for Volunteer Staff meetings (i.e. schedule the meetings for at least one semester in advance)
- Act as a liaison between the Volunteer Staff and OP Professional Staff
- Facilitate Core Staff meetings by gathering agenda items and ensuring that developmental components (such as articles or new skills) are included in each meeting.
- Make sure that each program has a core staff member associated as a contact

PROGRAM PLANNING

BACKGROUND

Activities should meet the following criteria:

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- Most should be short in duration - 3 hours or less - some can be full day, but there should be few of these each semester
- Typically programs are introductory (ie. for beginners) - only veteran instructors will be allowed to teach higher skill level programs
- Programs must be in alignment with the Outdoor Program's mission (see earlier in this manual).
- Programs need to be low cost - when considering a program, remember that all materials, transportation, & equipment has some type of related cost. Usually programs that are near campus or Duluth and use little gear are the lowest cost.
- No programs will be offered during the first week of the semester and finals week (the only exception can be kayaking in the pool, open climbing hours, and orientation type activities)
- Programs must be ones which our audience would be interested in (when planning, put yourself in their shoes - would you want to participate in a given program? and pay?)
- Fall programs are usually very successful, yet marketing at tables is key
- Participation in winter programs is the most successful - keep them fun and short.

PROGRAM CATEGORIES

1. "Canned" - these are programs and activities which have a proven track record, are offered almost every year, and have existing lesson plans written. examples include: Hawk Ridge Outings, Winter Slumberland, Papermaking, Climbing Outside at Ely's Peak, or Edible Wild Plants Hike, among many others).
2. "New" - these are untried programs or programs that have only been offered a couple times before. **HERE IS WHERE INNOVATION IS NEEDED!** This is an opportunity for you to create innovative programs that keep the Outdoor Program on the cutting edge of creativity. Try new things. Take a different perspective.
3. "Trips" - trips that are listed in the Calendar of Events are weekend trips that are within a 2 hour drive of campus. Few of these are offered per semester (max 4 per semester). Some of these trips are also "canned" (like the Voyageur Initiation).

INSTRUCTOR QUALIFICATIONS

For Programs/activities that are on-campus or at Bagley Nature Area

1. Instructor must have knowledge of the subject well beyond that which will be taught (ie. know more about winter camping than will be taught)
2. Instructor must commit to developing a lesson plan and getting this approved by the volunteer staff coordinator. This means that you think about the processes that you will use to teach the subject and you will practice prior to the program.

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3. Instructor must know the setting they will be using - be prepared! (ex. if you are doing a hike in Bagley, you better know your route and what you will find along that route)

For Programs/activities off-campus (including trips)

1. Lead Instructor must have advanced first aid and c.p.r. certification
2. Instructors must know their site. If this means scouting prior, do it! Do not go blind into a site you haven't been to recently.
3. Instructor must have been checked off for van use by one of the professional staff.
4. Instructor must create a lesson plan as well as complete a Risk Assessment Form (available from Tim or Kaija) and turn it in. AN ACTIVITY IS NOT READY TO GO UNTIL KAIJA HAS APPROVED THIS FORM.

CANNED PROGRAMS THAT SHOULD ALWAYS BE OFFERED

EVERY SEMESTER:

- women on the wall
- kayaking in the pool
- indoor climbing center open hours

FALL/WINTER:

- climbing outside
- climbing center open house
- voyageur initiation trip
- halloween paddle
- map & compass clinic
- hawk ridge outing
- ski waxing clinic
- apple cidering

WINTER/SPRING:

- winter slumberland
- telemark skiing
- split rock stream ski
- morning birding tours
- maple-syruping

PREPARING & CONDUCTING A PROGRAM

There are many pieces to delivering a program with RSOP. It is important that you follow all of them!

What has been done before the semester begins:

1. You have developed a description of a program and provided information on possible expenses to Tim or the Volunteer Staff Coordinator.
2. Your description and all other components of information have been re-written to fit into the Program Catalog.
3. An Information Page has been written that gives participants details about your activity (you may be needed to help write this).

Resources that can help you in preparing for your program:

1. Tim's office – this is a storehouse of past program/activity files and resources. Check here to see lesson plans that have already been written.
2. Beth & the Registration/Information staff – they can help you understand the participants who will be involved with your program/activity. You should also check-in with them to see if they have any questions that may help them work with potential participants.

Preparation Time-Line

3- 4 Weeks Prior to Program:

- Meet with Volunteer Staff Coordinator or Tim for initial check in
- Meet with co-leader(s) to design lesson plan (including itinerary) equipment list (and menu) – REMEMBER TO CHECK TO SEE IF THESE ALREADY EXIST
- Give copy of lesson plan/equipment list to Volunteer Staff Coordinator or Tim for review
- Set up time with Greg to get checked off to drive the van (if using the van for transport)

2 Weeks Prior to Program:

- Gather all information needed for the activity (field guides, maps, etc.)
 - Meet with Volunteer Staff Coordinator or Tim to discuss lesson plan and logistics
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- Clarify expectations of the program
- Expectations of each other
- Divide tasks prior to and during program
- Complete/update Risk Assessment form and turn into Kaija
- Complete MP4 (equipment) check out form and return to MP4 person

1 Week Prior to Program:

- Finalize lesson plan/itinerary and give final copy to Volunteer Staff Coordinator or Tim

Days Prior to the Program:

- Retrieve items from MP4 and pick up items
- Check out first aid kit
- Check out cell phone
- Get van keys from Greg's office
- Pick up the folder of participant information from Beth the Day of the Program

Before Participants leave program

- Have the participants complete evaluation forms
- Thank participants for attending, and encourage them to attend specific OP programs in the future

Program Follow up:

- Complete peer evaluation form
- Turn in program folder to Beth the following day (including evaluation forms-both participant and peer)
- Return all equipment and remaining materials to appropriate locations