

Date: March 9, 2020

To: Cathy Sandeen, Chancellor

From: John Stalvey, Interim Provost 

Cc: Jeff Jesse, Dean of the College of Health; Vice Provost for Health Programs
Benjamin Rush, Committee Chair & Assistant Professor of Outdoor Leadership
T.J. Miller, Director, Department of Health, Physical Education & Recreation
Daniel O'Connor, Director, Prince William Sound College
Susan Kalina, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Claudia Lampman, Vice Provost for Student Success

Re: **AY20 Expedited Program Review Findings – Outdoor Leadership AAS**

I have reviewed the dean's findings and the completed Expedited Program Review Template for the Outdoor Leadership AAS. The Provost's Office did not receive an Optional Program Response Form from the program.

Recommendations

My recommendation is to accept the decision and recommendations of the dean. The next Program Review will be included in the regular ongoing program review schedule.

Decision

Recommend Continuation



Date: February 21, 2020

To: John Stalvey, Interim Provost

From: Jeff Jessee, Dean of the College of Health and Vice Provost of Health Programs

Cc: Benjamin Rush, Committee Chair & Assistant Professor of Outdoor Leadership
T.J. Miller, Director, Department of Health, Physical Education & Recreation
Daniel O'Connor, Director, Prince William Sound College

Re: AY20 Expedited Program Review Findings

Program/s in this review: Outdoor Leadership AAS

Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable): N/A

Campuses where the program is delivered: Prince William Sound College

Centrality of Program Mission and Supporting Role:

The Outdoor Leadership AAS is a two-year degree program focused on teaching the skills needed to work in the dynamic tourism, outdoor education, recreation, and adventure film fields. With new leadership in 2019, the program is expected to refocus on outdoor education and leadership. The program is delivered only through Prince William Sound College, in the heart of unsurpassed opportunities for outdoor recreation. There is a strong link between outdoor recreation and human health and wellness. As a result, this program makes an important contribution to the College of Health mission to improve the health and wellbeing of people and communities.

Program Demand (including service to other programs), Efficiency, and Productivity:

Unfortunately, program demand has historically been low. During this review period, only seven students have graduated from the program. The number of majors has also remained low, but did increase up to 11 in fall 2019 (up from an average of 7.8 per year, from FY13 to FY19). The new leadership is aware of these issues and is exploring how to best improve program demand, efficiency, and productivity. Progress is already happening. The program has strong support from community and industry partners.

Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success:

The Outdoor Leadership AAS has a strong foundation in high impact teaching practices. Experiential learning and community engagement are incorporated throughout the curriculum. Students participate in internships that can lead to employment opportunities. The new leadership is commended for developing a strong focus on academic assessment and student success. Key initiatives have been identified to improve program quality and student success. These initiatives are likely to also improve program demand, efficiency, and productivity.

Program Duplication / Distinctiveness:

There are no other comparable programs in the University of Alaska system. Educational opportunities in outdoor studies are available from other private universities and organizations.

Commendations and Recommendations:

The program makes an important contribution to improving the health and wellness of people and communities. Until now, student interest in the Outdoor Leadership AAS has been rather low. New leadership was appointed in 2019. The program now has an opportunity to be rejuvenated with a stronger focus on outdoor education and leadership. The program conducted a comprehensive academic assessment and began to implement key recommendations for program improvement. Overall, the program is headed in the right direction.

Decision:

Continuation.

Submission date: February 10, 2020

Program/s in this review: Outdoor Leadership AAS

Campuses where the program is delivered: Valdez, Prince William Sound College

Members of the program review committee:

- TJ Miller, Director, Anchorage
- Benjamin Rush, Assistant Professor, Prince William Sound

1. Centrality of Program Mission and Supporting Role

Relevancy of the program

- When you think of Prince William Sound College and the Outdoor Leadership Program, you think of the million-dollar classroom...the Mecca of outdoor adventure perfection. Due to the incredible location in the outdoors, it's considered one of the most beautiful, rugged wilderness areas in the world...the perfect spot on the globe to train up adventure leaders for the job.
- The outdoor program at PWSC is unique due to this incredible environment. Students come here to study outdoor leadership. Most of them come from the lower 48 and with no out of state tuition and the lure of mountains, they come. Due to the uniqueness of the program and the distinction in being in an area that is considered the world's best sea kayaking, the world's best heliskiing and mountaineering, it offers what other programs can't. It is the only UA program that offers an associate in Outdoor Leadership. For those students who are unsure of what path they want to take in life and the cost of our program, it's very attractive.

Any role the program plays in supporting other academic programs

- Support General Education courses
- Business Administration courses
- Physical Education Professional
- Physical Education Recreation

Partnerships with outside agencies, businesses, or organizations;

- PWSC has been working with our internship coordinator. Our internship coordinator sets up programs with the NPS, BLM, VAA, AVV, RCAC, Alaska Geographic, local parks and recreation and the Valdez fisheries. According to the coordinator, this is the first time in 5 years that the internships have been so abundant. Students are very fortunate to be able to choose from many options at some incredible programs.
- We have signed an MOU with the National Outdoor Leadership School. It allows 2 of our students to partake in a NOLS course for a 75% discount. It also allows a faculty to attend the Wilderness Risk Management Conference for free. The usual cost is over 500.00 dollars.
- We are a community partner with Leave No Trace.

- We are partnered with the Valdez Adventure Alliance. I am on the board of directors and our students often volunteer at their events. We have already helped with the management of Blueberry Campground and currently volunteer with the Valdez Ice Fest and the Bikefest. VAA has also offered 2 internships for this spring semester.

Specific workforce development and employment opportunities relevant to the program.

- One class that is required is PER 262, Outdoor Recreation. Part of the curriculum is to go out and meet the managers or directors of those programs that were listed in the previous section. A new part of the curriculum is connecting with outdoor professionals. Our students have been able to connect with some incredible people. Through these contacts, the chances of job selection will increase. From each of the above contact list, employment opportunities are available. At this time because of the timing of the program review, it is too early to predict where students will be placed. The Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the local Parks and Recreation program and the Adventure Alliance have already reached out for interns for both spring and summer of 2020.

Sources of extramural support and funding for the program or any high demand job designation for the program.

- Since Outdoor Leadership is our main focus, the NPS and BLM are the job designations for our program. The BLM and the Parks and Recreation Program have the largest amount of funding available for our program. From these internships, a total of 56,500 is being allotted for students.
- This semester a proposal was written for funding a spring educational program with Alaska Geographic and UAA. The program received \$4,800.
- Our program held a ski swap this semester to help community and help fund our program.

2. Program Demand, Efficiency, and Productivity

- Our student enrollment is on the rise. One student graduated in 2017, 5 in 2018 and 1 in 2019. From the data, the dates with the enrollment begin in 2013, but students graduating didn't start until 2017. One negative aspect is our students graduating. Since 2013, student enrollment was 55 students with only 7 students graduating. Our enrollment is 11 students as of fall 2019. 2 new students have enrolled for this spring semester of 2020. We anticipate 7 students for the fall of 2020. We are projected for at least 18-20 students. This is the largest class we have had since the beginning of the Outdoor Leadership program.
- In regard to tuition, fees and extramural funding, to cover the cost of faculty is debatable. In the last 7 years, the average amount of credits taken by students were 13.4. Taking that number times the average number of students for the last 7 years, would be a total of 105.19 credit hours. At PWSC, each credit is 223.00. The total cost from tuition would be around \$23,457 per semester. The average salary for an assistant professor is \$64,000. According to our president there is funding from the state to help offset the difference.
- The question has been asked, "why have so few students graduated or why have students left"? 2 people in the admission's department who are senior level at PWSC made these remarks. The Outdoor Leadership program has had several different professors with different philosophies of how they think the program should be run. One admissions person said that a

student commented on how it was confusing after they had been here for one year and the next year, it all changed.

- There is also the issue of why no students graduated between 2013 to 2016. A task force was formed to look at reasons why students left the program. The first step is using the UAA survey system to reach out to past students to find out their reasons for leaving.

3. Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success

Specialized accreditation process and status

- PWSC is now an educational partner with Leave No Trace.
- PWSC is now has an affiliation with the National Outdoor Leadership School
- Accreditation with the Wilderness Education Association has been put in motion.

Currency of the curriculum

Student Outcomes

Managed by HPER and they are being updated and should be changed by fall of next fall.

Innovative program design

As the new professor of the Outdoor Leadership program, I see us going in a different direction. In the past 6 years, one professor was in the direction of adventure filming. The last professor was into outdoor skills. I hope to bring them into the direction of outdoor education and leadership. In the past, we used 2 adjunct professors to teach a skills class. I am promoting one qualified adjunct professor to be the main instructor and a qualified student as the other instructor. This gives the student more opportunities for leading, instructing and cutting cost.

Availability and indications of quality of distance offerings

- Due to the style of our classes, we don't offer distance learning.

The outcomes we had listed for 2019:

- Evaluate their personal readiness for leadership through reflection on the synthesis of their course experience and by communicating leadership behaviors verbally and in writing.
- Explain the benefits of outdoor recreation for individual and community well-being
- Evaluate risks associated with outdoor activities and identify methods to reduce and/or mitigate those risks.
- Demonstrate proficiency in technical backcountry/aquatic skills necessary for outdoor recreation professionals in the student's areas of interest
- Demonstrate proficiency in event/trip/field excursion planning and hosting.

The assessment plan was updated in February, 2019, adding a timeline for assessment of objectives. On our small campus one lead Outdoor Leadership faculty teaches a majority of the core courses and adjunct instructors help teach skill courses. The lead faculty member for the program collected and analyzed data throughout each course and checked in with adjunct instructors about student progress in their courses. Students exiting the program (either prior to completion or those completing this summer with their required internship) were asked to complete an exit survey that included questions regarding all SLO. Faculty reviewed assignments corresponding with SLOs and reported if students were meeting objectives. These initial findings are based on small student numbers. Generally in faculty assessment (assignments correlating with each SLO) showed that students scored at or above 80% proficient in their practical skills and generally, these small number of students expressed at least

a sense of personal growth in their leadership abilities. Feedback from students and employers after completion of internships was very positive and indicated that skills and knowledge gained by the students in the program were valuable. A review of student exit surveys has shown that the program scored highest in regard to objectives 2 and 3 (theory & risk management) and lowest with objectives 4-5 (outdoor skills and planning/hosting). Faculty have begun implementing individual leadership activities and community outreach projects into several core courses to strengthen students' abilities in regard to outdoor skills, leadership and event planning. Also, Faculty have discussed offering a broader range of outdoor skill courses which will be implemented with the new curriculum changes. We obviously have to continue gathering data slowly with our small number of students enrolled.

- Experiential Learning is paramount in any outdoor program. In our core academic classes a minimum of 10 volunteer hours are required. This year we collaborated with the Adventure Alliance and helped them with a local state park that the alliance manages. Students were clearing roads with chainsaws and cutting away brush for better walkways and driving.
- As stated before, PWSC has been working with our internship coordinator. Our internship coordinator sets up programs with the NPS, BLM, VAA, AVV, RCAC, Alaska Geographic, local parks and recreation and the Valdez fisheries. According to the coordinator, this is the first time in 5 years that the internships have been so abundant. Students are very fortunate to be able to choose from many options at some incredible programs.
- Like any outdoor program, field courses are the highlight. This semester we have offered Alaska Backpacking, Swift Water Rescue, Rock Climbing and Avalanche Rescue. Next semester we are offering Wilderness First Responder, beginning and intermediate sea kayaking, Avalanche Rescue 2, mountaineering and ice climbing. It is the largest assortment of outdoor courses offered at the school.
- Our beginning sea kayaking and intermediate kayaking courses are in collaboration with Alaska Geographic and UAA. The beginning class will be a 4-day field trip in the Prince William Sound and the intermediate is in Homer, Alaska for 10 days. This is the first time that PWSC has had extended periods of time on the water.

Student support

- All students go to academic support for advising. There is no advising on the faculty level.

Student Accomplishments

1. Currently, we have 2 students who are also Resident Assistants
2. We have 11 students in the program at this time which is the highest enrollment in 7 years
3. This springtime, we had 2 new students enroll.
4. Students completed their LNT trainer course certification
5. Two students were enrolled in fall internships with the Parks and Recreation agency.
6. 4 of our students are currently involved with spring internships. Two are working with the Valdez Parks and Recreation and two others are with the Valdez Adventure Alliance.
7. 2 of our students were elected to be student representatives for the college

4. Program Duplication / Distinctiveness

There are no duplications in our programs across UAA. PWSC has the only Associates in Outdoor Leadership

5. Summary Analysis

- This is my first year at PWSC. From what I have heard from past colleagues, there has been some challenges in our program. I have many years of experience both overseas and in another outdoor department at Northern Vermont University. My degree is in outdoor education and I have been employed by various outdoor programs over my life. I will be using my experience and schooling to benefit our program. By far what I have seen thus far the biggest strength to our program is our staffing. Working together is a key component to any program. I am fortunate to work with some great people that help make all this happen. From social media, internships, admissions, advising, housing and administration, they all do their part to make this program happen.

My plans for the future include the following:

- A progression of student learning has been lacking in our program. Skill classes have been taught for only one semester. We pride ourselves on developing outdoor leaders, but how can one learn an outdoor skill after 3 days? We are currently offering 2 semesters with selected courses such as sea kayaking, rock climbing and backpacking.
- Extended expedition. If you want to be an outdoor leader, you need to put in the time. As stated before, a weekend course isn't going to make you a leader. For the spring of 2020 and fall 2020, we are opening programs that are in the field for at least 10 days.
- I am building a pool of strong adjunct professors. I am not a one person department but having diversity and the strengths of fellow outdoor professionals is setting our students up for better success in the outdoor world.
- Our adjuncts are required to have their Wilderness First Responder if they want to teach in our program. WFR is the standard for outdoor programs. In the past, instructors were allowed to teach with any first aid training.
- I am very excited to be part of the outdoor program at UAA. I am very blessed to be working with T.J. Miller and the individuals I mentioned from PWSC. Numbers speak for themselves and with our anticipated enrollment for next fall, our program is moving in the right direction.