UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES & CAMPUS OUTDOOR RECREATION PROGRAMS

HUMBOLDT
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AORE

Association of
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and Education

THE
WILDERNESS
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UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES
& CAMPUS OUTDOOR RECREATION PROGRAMS

This report examines the challenges experienced and benefits received by campus outdoor recreation programs that provide recreation opportunities to individuals outside the student body and campus community. In particular, it considers the challenges and benefits of providing services to individuals from historically underserved communities.

The authors produced this report from data collected during focus groups conducted by the Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education (AORE) and The Wilderness Society at the 2015 AORE National Conference.

The purpose of this report and the included literature review is to:
1) Raise awareness about the need to provide accessible and relevant outdoor recreation to underserved communities
2) Better understand why campuses with outdoor recreation programs have not historically reached out to underserved communities
3) Examine the role of college campuses, AORE and The Wilderness Society in offering and/or supporting outdoor recreation to underserved communities

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Background

In October 2014, AORE approved a 5-year strategic plan to guide decisions and priorities for the Association through 2020. This plan makes a clear commitment to support and cultivate inclusiveness in outdoor recreation and education programs. "We welcome diversity, aim to be accessible and inclusive, and work to remove barriers to participation. We strive to be an organization that is reflective of the current and expanding community." (AORE Strategic Plan 2015-2020). In doing so, AORE embraced the changing demographics of America and the importance of offering outdoor recreation and education opportunities to all individuals.

The Wilderness Society (TWS) is the premier national organization working to protect public lands where outdoor recreation and education programs take place. The mission of TWS is to protect wilderness and inspire Americans to care for their public wild places.

"College students backpacking" by Geneviève Marchand

AORE and TWS began partnering in 2012 in an effort to increase access to public land in hopes of achieving a common goal - to see ALL Americans actively visit and care for natural areas and to enjoy and benefit from outdoor recreation and education opportunities.

The following report will briefly summarize the current knowledge regarding participation in outdoor recreation by diverse populations. It will then share the findings of the 2015 focus group on campus outdoor recreation programs and underserved communities. Finally, we will offer recommendations for campus outdoor organizations that would like to increase the

role they play in providing access to outdoor recreation and education to underserved communities.

Definitions

Underserved communities: Groups of individuals that historically have had limited access to, or participation in, outdoor recreation opportunities (e.g., hiking, biking, fishing, skiing) and may face barriers to participation in these activities (e.g., income, physical access, discrimination).

Campus outdoor recreation programs: Programs offered by colleges and universities that are generally for college students and that often include activities like outdoor recreation excursions, outdoor recreation skill classes, and rentals of outdoor equipment. Outdoor recreation activities are varied. Campus outdoor programs have traditionally offered activities such as backpacking, kayaking, canoeing and rock climbing. However, less common activities could include bow hunting, fly fishing, snorkeling, telemark skiing, wildlife viewing, or even trail running.

Current knowledge

Outdoor recreation has been influenced by a series of rapid demographic changes in the United States during the last twenty to thirty years. These changes include, but are not limited to a greater Hispanic and Asian population, modifications in the traditional family composition (ex: living solo and more multigenerational households), redefinition of gender roles and a shrinking

Photo by All-Outdoors California Whitewater Rafting/CC BY

middle class. Predictions have been made that these changes will produce differences in individual preferences and beliefs, and in the activities in which individuals will participate (Cordell et al., 1999). Further, there is widespread recognition that there are demographic disparities in outdoor recreation participation (Gramann, 1996). There are also significant disparities in public land visitation, particularly in national parks and recreational areas (Floyd, 1999). This was particularly true for women and people of color in comparison to men and white individuals. Differences in values, marginalization and discrimination have been named as some of the theories explaining these differences (Floyd, 1999). Gender differences in participation have decreased in the last decade as men and women now participate more

equally in outdoor activities. In contrast to this equalization, African Americans, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and persons of other races and ethnicities still participate less in outdoor activities compared to Caucasian individuals (Outdoor Recreation Participation Report, 2015).

Recognizing these disparities, there has been increasing interest in achieving greater equality in outdoor recreation participation. Toward that end, organizations like AORE and TWS would like to develop a deeper understanding of the barriers that people face when they try to visit natural environments and participate in outdoor recreation. Some of the barriers commonly reported by non-Caucasian groups are: lack of information (Cordell et al., 1999; Washburne, 1978), fear for personal safety (Cordell et al., 1999; Johnson, Bowker & Cordell, 2001), lack of transportation, lack of knowledge, lack of diversity in staffing, and lack of money (Cordell et al., 1999; Johnson, Bowker & Cordell, 2001; Washburne, 1978). More barriers exist and have yet to be identified. It could also be argued that outdoor recreation providers have not systematically reached out to those who frequently encounter barriers to participation or that their outreach methods are insufficient and unspecific (Walker & Virden, 2005).

The increased recognition of these disparities has led to a concerted effort to make outdoor recreation and education more inclusive. The U.S. Government launched the "Find Your Park" and "Every Kid in a Park" campaigns in 2015. The Find Your Park campaign (http://findyourpark.com/) encourages everyone in America to find and visit a park or other public land in celebration of the National Park Service centennial. The Every Kid in a Park campaign (https://www.everykidinapark.gov/) seeks to provide a park experience to every fourth-grade student sometime during their fourth-grade year, with a particular emphasis on schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families.

Photo by Ronald Laubenstein/ CC BY

Likewise, emerging organizations are striving to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in outdoor recreation participation. Groups such as Latino Outdoors and Outdoor Afro are working directly with the land management agencies and national organizations such as the Outdoors Alliance for Kids to provide more outdoor recreation opportunities to individuals who have historically been marginalized.

College and university outdoor programs have an opportunity to do the same. Hundreds of institutions around the countries currently offer outdoor programs to their students. These programs include outings, skill classes, equipment rentals, leadership training, and first-year/incoming student outdoor orientations. Some of

these programs like the Dartmouth Outing Club (Dartmouth University) and Williams Outing Club (Williams College) have been in existence for more than 100 years. As further evidence of the impact of outdoor programs at colleges and universities, Dartmouth College and Colgate University take over 1,000 students backpacking every year, the University of California, Berkeley takes 1,500 sea kayaking participants on outings, and Idaho State University reports more than 800 participants for their rock climbing trips (Poff & Webb, 2007).

Colleges are ideally positioned to connect with historically underserved populations as students look for service learning opportunities and faculty are eager to put their concepts and ideas into action. Partnerships between university recreation programs and their local communities benefit both campuses and the community. Addressing community issues, developing new opportunities for research, and providing students real-life experiences are all reported benefits of these partnerships (Cooper, Kotval-K, Kotval & Mullin, 2014; Kellett & Goldstein, 1999). There is an opportunity for higher education institutions to reach out to underserved populations in their communities and increase access to outdoor recreation experiences. This study investigates why so many institutions have been resistant to this idea or unable to extend their services outside their own student population.

"LA County Fair" by BLM California/ CC BY

Methods

A focus group format was chosen to collect rich perspectives from participants. This format allowed individuals to share their stories and listen to other people's experiences in regards to serving underserved communities.

All members of the AORE were contacted via the AORE email listserv and invited to voluntarily participate in this study if they were (1) currently offering programs to underserved communities; or (2) would like to offer programs to underserved communities. Additionally, AORE members were asked to refer other college program colleagues they knew who might be interested in this study. A total of 31 individuals responded and ten participants were chosen and met in November 2015 at the AORE Annual Conference. Individuals were divided into two groups of five individuals each. All ten participants were from different higher education institutions located in the United States.

A series of semi-structured interview questions was used to gather information about the topic. Questions included asking about their current program, current services to outside communities (non-college students), their understanding of underserved communities, program offerings to underserved communities, challenges and benefits of serving persons

BLM Career, photo by Mike Howard/CC BY

outside their campus community, and the support needed from their campus and AORE to provide more services to underserved communities. The focus groups met for about 2 hours. Each group included a note taker and a facilitator. After the session, the note takers and facilitators met to review notes and add information that may have been omitted.

In the week following the conference, an electronic focus group was conducted with three individuals who were unable to attend the conference, and the information gathered from this focus group was used to strengthen the information collected at the in-person focus groups. The same series of questions was used with these individuals.

Finally, notes from the focus groups were coded and analyzed by each researcher, and then compared for accuracy. Two external reviewers were also utilized to confirm findings. A final set of themes and conclusions were agreed upon.

Participants

Types of institutions

13 Institutions (including electronic participants)
- 2 community-colleges
  - 3 private institutions
  - 10 public institutions

Student Population Size
- Less than 10 000 students = 4
- Between 10 0000 - 20 000 students = 3
- Between 20 000 – 30 000 students = 3
- Over 30 000 students = 3

Results

The discussions with the focus group participants produced several themes and analysis of these themes revealed a number of key findings. The four themes uncovered are:

1. Challenges encountered when providing services to non-students
2. Resources needed to expand programs for non-students
3. Benefits received from providing services to non-students
4. Challenges encountered when providing services to underserved communities

Some of the findings relate to programs that serve any population outside the university student body. Other findings were unique to situations in which programs served, or tried to serve, historically underserved populations. This report will summarize the findings relevant to both situations. We also include a section that highlights the challenges encountered when providing services to underserved communities specifically.

Challenges encountered when providing services to non-students

Focus group participants identified challenges that fall into four categories:

- *Administrative/Institutional*
- *Human*
- *Legal*
- *Logistical*

1. ***Administrative and institutional***

   a. Contrasting campus priorities
   b. University/College's mission statement
   c. Lack of staff availability
   d. Barriers to hiring new staff
   e. Pushback against use of student fees

Focus group participants identified five administrative and institutional barriers to providing recreation programs to non-students. All five of these challenges apply to programs serving all populations outside the university community, including underserved populations.

Refusal by university administrators to prioritize serving outside/underserved communities emerged as a critical underlying problem that likely increases many of the other challenges described below. This lack of prioritization can often be traced to university mission statements and outdoor program mission statements, many of which focus on providing services to students and may discourage programs from providing services to non-students.

"University of Vermont" / CC

As an additional factor contributing to this challenge, some campus outdoor programs operate under "auxiliaries," which are separate programs that may have unique priorities that differ from those of the college or university.

Some focus group participants cited a lack of staff needed to provide programs for non-student

populations as a barrier, coupled with the university's reluctance to create the additional staff positions that would be needed to deliver programming to non-students. In addition, some participants explained that their outdoor programs are primarily funded by student fees, and said they have encountered resistance to using student fees to provide services to people outside of the university community.

2. *Human*

    a. Disparities between students and non-students
    b. Lack of disposable income
    c. Priorities for staff time and capacity
    d. Lack of relevant product/activities
    e. Lack of interest
    f. Parental concerns

The human challenges identified by focus group participants relate to the needs or constraints of the students, the staff, and the outside participants. These challenges affect a programs' ability to serve outside populations generally, though some are especially problematic in relation to underserved populations.

To begin with, some programs identified disparities between students and non-

students in terms of physical abilities, race, racial understanding/sensitivity/awareness, and maturity. These differences made it difficult to offer the right programming for non-students and underserved participants, as well as the right training for student leaders to prepare them to provide outdoor programs.

In addition, even when programs could offer the right opportunities for non-students, several focus group participants noted that some individuals might not be able to participate for monetary reasons, either because they lack disposable income to spend on participating in a recreation program or an inability to spend time participating in a recreation program when that time could be spent working to generate income.

A few focus group participants cited the staff time and staff capacity required to run programs for non-students and underserved populations as a challenge. They explained that programs for non-students require additional training, planning, marketing, and preparation in addition to what is required for programs targeted at the university community.

Some programs also felt challenged providing programs for underserved communities because they did not feel they have the right product to offer participants from these communities. They expressed concern that their outdoor programming is not relevant or accessible to underserved communities and that serves as a significant barrier. A related concern is the need to overcome existing attitudes of non-student communities that serve as barriers to participation. These attitudes include a lack of interest in outdoor pursuits and reluctance among parents to send their children on trips with college-age student leaders.

3. *Legal*

    a. Non-compete clauses
    b. Insurance coverage
    c. Minimum wage and maximum hours
    d. Background checks and risk management for abuse
    e. Prohibitions of college students on high school grounds
    f. Recreation permit restrictions and group size limits
    g. Income tax liabilities

Focus group participants identified several actions that would need to be taken to ensure legal protection and compliance for programs that serve non-students. Several programs explained that their schools are governed by non-compete clauses that limit their program's ability to provide services that are substantially similar to services provided by local businesses. These clauses are meant to avoid the perception that university programs are using state money to compete with local business operations.

A number of programs cited limitations in university insurance coverage and said they would be required to obtain additional insurance coverage for non-student participants. Some focus group participants also said that providing programming for non-students could be limited by the minimum wage requirements and maximum hour restrictions that would apply to paid student leaders.

A few programs expressed concern about the need to conduct background checks in order to provide services to minors, and the need to obtain insurance coverage for abuse and molestation risks in this situation. In one situation, a university program was required to navigate state laws that forbid college students from being on high school grounds. This limited the university program's ability to provide programming to students at the high school.

Finally, some programs said limitations on the availability of recreation permits to use federal lands, and limitations on the size of groups operating under those permits, make it difficult to expand trips to include non-students. One program also reported being told that renting equipment to non-students could result in income tax liability for the school, which was undesirable.

4. *Logistical*

   a. Campus accessibility
   b. Transporting minors
   c. Accountability for rental equipment

The most frequently identified logistical challenges were campus accessibility and transportation. Focus group participants reported challenges getting potential participants from outside of the

"College students winter camping" by Geneviève Marchand

university to the campus where the programs were offered, sometimes because there was a lack of sufficient on-campus parking. Programs also reported having problems providing transportation for program activities. In a few cases, this was because of a prohibition on transporting high school students in university vehicles. In others, it was because of a state requirement to transport school-age children in pre-approved vehicles such as school buses.

Finally, one program said it was a challenge holding non-students accountable for returning university rental equipment, since the university is unable to withhold grades for non-students.

5. *Other*

a. Disparities in operational models and priorities

One focus group participant said that disparities in operational models serve as a barrier to providing services to non-students generally and underserved populations in particular. In working with outside partner organizations to provide programs to underserved communities, this program discovered that its partners have very different operational models that often do not include adventure-based programming. Consequently, although the partner may be able to provide a pathway to underserved communities, there will still be challenges in providing adventure-based programming to these participants.

Resources needed to expand programs for non-students

During our focus groups, we asked participants what resources they would need in order to provide recreation opportunities to outside or underserved communities. The responses of participants fall into three categories:

- *Administrative and Institutional*
- *Human*
- *Logistical*

1. *Administrative/ Institutional*

a. Expansion of the values and mission of the institution
b. Additional funding for outreach
c. Additional funding for hiring
d. Consent and reward
e. A better understanding of program benefits and broader implication
f. Clear definition of "underserved"

One threshold need identified by many focus group participants is for their institutions to recognize the value of community partnerships and expand their missions and priorities to include providing services to people in the community. Unless schools embrace this as a priority, outdoor programs will not have support for providing services beyond the university

community and program leaders will not feel valued and rewarded for doing so.

Not surprisingly, a large number of focus group participants identified the need for additional funding in order to serve people outside of the university community. Participants cited the need for resources to reach out to communities beyond campus and to develop and offer programs that would add value to those communities. Participants also cited the need to hire additional staff to operate programs.

A small number of participants identified resources needed that would help them frame a program for underserved communities. These include a purposeful understanding of the value of providing and growing these programs, as well as a broader recognition that recreation is a means to an end rather than simply a one-time opportunity for fun in the outdoors. One participant suggested that recognizing this value would lead to increased intentionality in who they are serving and why. Participants also mentioned the need for a clear definition of what defines "underserved" individuals, though they recognized that this definition might be specific to each community.

2. *Human*

    a.   Additional staff and student leaders
    b.   More diverse leaders
    c.   Diversity training
    d.   Activities specific for underserved communities
    e.   Organizational partnerships

Focus group participants identified several human resources that they need to provide programs to persons outside of the university and they identified resources needed to target programs at underserved individuals.

Several respondents said they need additional staff and student leader capacity in order to run programs for outside populations. For programs targeting underserved populations, having a more diverse and inclusive group of leaders would help to improve programming for underserved populations. In addition, providing diversity, equity and inclusion training to staff would help staff develop a better understanding of underserved populations.

Focus group participants also felt that, to be successful, they would need programming strategies that are better tailored to underserved communities. They recognized the need to diversify programming away from simply the high adventure model to include other types of valuable outdoor experiences. Respondents also felt that it would be beneficial to form partnerships with organizations that represent underserved communities. These partnerships

would make outreach simpler and less labor intensive for the university program, and would help them close the gap between the programs they currently offer and what they would like to provide to underserved communities.

3. *Logistical*

    a.   Larger facilities
    b.   More adaptive equipment

Focus group participants identified several logistical constraints that limited their ability to serve non-students. Increasing the size and operating capacity of their recreation facilities would increase their ability to serve outside populations. In addition, acquiring more adaptive recreation equipment would increase their ability to serve individuals with different physical capabilities.

"Adaptive Recreation" by Christina Spicuzza/ CC BY

Benefits received from providing services to non-students

1. Additional revenue
2. Student recruitment and community engagement
4. Educational benefits for program participants and student leaders
5. Mental health benefits
6. Affordable outdoor recreation
7. Diversification of program participants
8. Increased access to outdoor recreation

In addition to identifying the challenges and resources needed, focus group participants discussed the benefits of serving outside populations generally and underserved populations in particular. Most programs reported direct benefits to the program and the university. These include generating additional revenue for the university, improving student recruitment and increasing the relevance of the program and the school to the local community.

Many programs also described educational benefits for student participants and student leaders. Programs targeted at underserved communities expose students to populations that are often more diverse than programs targeted at the student body. As a result, these programs provide student leaders with opportunities to develop more versatile leadership, communication, and teamwork skills.

One focus group participant identified the mental health benefits that programs provide to the individuals they serve and another participant mentioned the research opportunities for academic faculty that outdoor programming for outside communities, and underserved populations in particular, provide.

Two other benefits that participants described come specifically from targeting underserved populations. The first is diversification of program participants, which respondents identified as a benefit of targeting individuals with limited physical abilities. The second benefit is increased access opportunities for underserved populations. Providing programs to underserved populations allows them to experience affordable outdoor recreation that would otherwise be unavailable to them or prohibitively expensive.

Challenges encountered when providing services to underserved communities

While many of the challenges and resource needs described above were associated with serving anyone outside the campus population, there were a few that were specific to programs that target historically underserved communities. We feel it is important to highlight these so that programs can recognize the differences.

As we know, there is no universal definition of the term "underserved communities." Above, we offered this working definition:

> *Underserved communities*: Groups of individuals that historically have had limited access to or participation in outdoor recreation opportunities (e.g., hiking, biking, fishing, skiing) and may face barriers to participation in those activities (e.g., income, physical access, discrimination).

During our focus groups, we asked participants what the term "underserved community" meant to them. Here is a summary of their answers:

- Historically underrepresented individuals
- Individuals lacking access to amenities
- People that are outside outreach efforts and are generally not the target of marketing campaigns
- Individuals with a physical or mental impairment that requires adaptive program or equipment
- Individuals or groups of individuals that are unable to participate in programs because of financial, social, emotional and physical challenges

With these definitions in mind, we note the following challenges and resource needs that were specifically associated with providing recreation programming to underserved communities.

- Administratively, the role of the **mission or priorities** of the college were again a main barrier. Program administrators reported difficulties making the case for serving individuals outside the student population, even when doing so would provide opportunities to underserved individuals.
- With regard to human challenges, the **cost of programs** was a major barrier. Focus group participants noted that the **lack of disposable income** in underserved communities made it difficult for them to participate.
- Logistically, participants reported **transportation difficulties** for underserved individuals to reach their facilities.
- Another human challenge was the need to offer underserved communities **products and activities that were attractive and of value** to them. Focus group participants recognized that underserved communities may have no interest in the "high adventure" programs historically offered by university recreation programs.

Application of Research Findings

Focus group participants provided many valuable insights on the opportunities and challenges colleges and universities encounter in providing recreation services beyond their student bodies. We detail some of the lessons learned and provide some recommended strategies for success below.

Recommended Strategies - Serving Individuals Outside the Student population

1. *Address the Legal and Risk Management Barriers*

A critical first step to provide services beyond the student body is to identify and address any legal barriers and risk management to providing these services. Our focus group participants identified several key issues to address on the front end:

a. **Review insurance coverage** to ensure that coverage is provided for non-students. If not already provided, determine whether coverage for services to non-students can be obtained.
b. Determine whether your university has any type of **non-competition limitation**

with local businesses. If a non-competition limitation exists, design your program so that it provides a service that is not currently being offered by a local business. Alternatively, consider partnering with a local business to jointly provide programs to non-students. These partnerships can have significant benefits for the school and the business, engendering goodwill in the community and improving relationships between university administrators and local businesses. Partnering with a business may also address some of the risk management and insurance issues that can come up when a university provides services to non-students. The business' insurance policy may be able to provide liability coverage in situations where the school could not.

c. In most instances, it is a good idea to **conduct background checks** on the students who will serve as leaders for programs involving non-students. If those programs involve minors, background checks are an absolute requirement. Develop appropriate strategies and protocols to manage abuse and molestation risks in programs serving youth.

d. Engage university legal staff to determine whether providing services beyond the student body will result in any **tax liability** for the university.

e. Similarly, determine whether using student or staff leaders to run programs for non-students will raise any **minimum wage** and **maximum hour** issues for the university.

f. If your program is partnering with an elementary or secondary school in providing services to non-students, determine whether there are **legal prohibitions** on college students being on school grounds.

g. If providing **transportation**, determine whether there are **state law** requirements for the types of vehicles that may be used to do so.

"Group campfire at Little Yosemite Valley" by Julie Herrick/ CC BY

2. *Develop a Strong Value Statement*

Comments from the participants in our focus group made it abundantly clear that one major challenge and imperative is to make a compelling case for the value of providing services to the people outside the university. Because there will inevitably be concerns expressed about whether providing these services is part of the institution's mission, proposals to provide these services will likely be more compelling if they emphasize the benefits to student development described above. This may include service learning opportunities, leadership development, professional work experiences and more. This will help tie the program back to the university's mission.

The focus groups' findings suggest that program administrators should be prepared to make this case on a regular basis, since questions about the value of serving non-students may be raised during program reviews and budget development process. For that reason and to achieve sustainability, program administrators should make a point of evaluating their programs and collecting data regularly to demonstrate the value of providing services to non-students and help justify the continuation of those services.

3. *Funding*

If possible, identify funding models that do not rely on the use of student fees to provide services beyond the student body. Doing so will enable programs that would like to provide these services to respond to criticism that they are using fees for unintended purposes.

One option is to charge non-students fees for participation, which can generate revenue to support the program. However, if the goal of the program is to provide opportunities to historically underserved individuals, there will be an upper limit on the amount that can be charged without adversely affecting participation by those individuals. A sliding scale model to subsidize services may be one way to address this concern.

Another option may be to seek funding through grants or donations. For example, there may be philanthropic organizations in the local community that are interested in providing support for programs that provide recreation and educational opportunities to local residents, particularly if there are no other organizations providing similar opportunities. There may also be individuals or organizations willing to make donations for this purpose. Emphasizing that the program provides valuable opportunities for interaction between student leaders and the local community and also provides significant educational value to both the students and participants may make the program more appealing to potential funders. Again, this is where evaluation of services becomes critical.

<u>Examples of successful programs:</u>

- **Humboldt State University** and the Humboldt Bay Aquatic Center (HBAC) received an annual grant from the California State Parks Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW). The Aquatic Center Grant program is used to promote "a safer and more enjoyable boating environment" and "offer on-the-water training to enhance basic boating safety" (www.dbw.ca.gov). Recently, the HBAC partnered with Latino Outdoors to offer free sea kayaking and stand-up paddleboard lessons to Latino community members.
- **Stanford University** reaches out to 500 students every year through the Stanford Outdoor Outreach Program (SOOP). The mission of this initiative is to enhance interpersonal relationships, foster community, and instill personal confidence in San Francisco Bay Area youth through facilitated outdoor experiences. Of the 500 students who participated each year, 99 percent are Latino and African American and 93 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Funds for this program come from various sources, including student fees, and general funding from endowment and tuition (http://stanfordsoop.weebly.com).
- **Radford University** runs a summer camp through their outdoor recreation program. Participants come from various backgrounds, including historically underserved communities, and are up to 13 years old. They have found out that younger participants were more likely to register, therefore targeting this age group instead of teenagers. The cost is $145 for two weeks of programming. This is possible because of other programs who already have logistics and human resources in place, charging more for their activities. The revenues generated help subsidize the summer camp and reduces the final cost to participants (M. Wagstaff, personal communication, May 9, 2016).
- **Colorado Mountain College** located in Leadville, Colorado, offers a yearly summer program called First Ascent. It is "designed to help young adults from various social and economic backgrounds develop leadership skills and confidence". The program is offered at no cost to 8th and 9th graders who reside in the College's district. The program is subsidized by the college and private funders. One essential aspect is the free transportation to and from the homes of participants (T. Shelton, personal communication, May 9, 2016).

4. *Provide High Quality Programming*

Ultimately, our most important recommendation is to develop a program that provides high quality and highly accessible services that meet the needs of the local community. We will discuss a few ways to help programs achieve this goal:

1. <u>Proper training</u> - It is important to prepare students who will serve as leaders in the program for the task of serving non-students. Even highly trained students may have limited experience interacting with participants that are not their peers and members of a relatively homogenous student body. Providing programming to the general public, or to historically underserved populations in particular will expose student leaders to an entirely different group of participants. This opportunity can be a valuable experience if they are well prepared for it, but disastrous if they are not. To prepare them, consider providing them with diversity, equity and inclusion training. One emerging provider of this training, the Avarna Group, caters specifically to recreation and conservation organizations. Free resources are available for review on their website (http://theavarnagroup.com/)

2. <u>Targeted programs</u> - Developing programs that provide what the targeted population wants or needs, and not what the university thinks they need, is an essential step to success. This means providing the kinds of activities people are interested in, for fees they can afford, and in a setting in which they feel comfortable. This may not fit neatly into the traditional adventure programming model that many

schools use in their outdoor programs for students. For example, consider offering activities like fishing or traditional survival skills instead of relying on rock climbing and kayaking. If working with a partner organization, anticipate that the organization may not have experience providing adventure programming. It may be necessary to adjust your approach and provide additional information to accommodate this lack of experience. Do the required necessary advance work with your partner organization to set your program up for success.

3. <u>Working with youth</u> - If the program is intended to serve minors without their parents present, plan for the task of orienting the parents of participants so that they feel confident that their children will have a worthwhile experience with minimal and manageable risks. In particular, the parents of high school age minors may be concerned about allowing their children to participate in programs led by college students. Be prepared to address this concern directly. Further, train your student staff to work with these youth and be professional at all times.

4. <u>Transportation and parking</u> - If it will be necessary for non-students to drive to campus and park on-site, develop a parking and transportation strategy to ensure that these issues do not become a barrier to participation. You may also offer options to meet off-campus, such as offering informational events at a partner organization's headquarters or sign-up by phone and email.

Photo by Geneviève Marchand

Recommendations for AORE

Focus group participants recommended that AORE take certain actions to help member outdoor programs develop and operate programs for historically underserved populations.

1. **Expand the reach and impact** of programs that provide opportunities for underserved or outside communities by taking the following actions:
   a. Help connect university recreation programs with organizations that serve underserved populations.
   b. Increase the number of municipal parks departments in the AORE membership.
   c. Become the industry standard by compiling best practices for serving underserved communities.
   d. Reduce the barrier that AORE conference registration rates represent to participation and inclusion of members of underserved communities. This would add depth and first-hand experience about how best to serve this population.
   e. Provide recognition for programs serving underserved communities, increasing awareness and hopefully inspiring additional programs to follow their examples.

2. **Increase education** on how to provide programming for underserved populations.
   a. Provide conference programming, financial resources and service opportunities that are focused on serving underserved communities,
   b. Provide programming between conferences such as regional conferences and

meetings for trip leaders to coordinate their work and discuss ways to improve and increase options for underserved communities.

 c. Collect data for underserved populations that would inform programs and trip leaders, as well as others interested in increasing services targeting the underserved.

3. **Advocate** for increases in programming and services for underserved populations.
 a. Seek a federal lands fee waiver for programs that work with underserved communities and help them get outside.
 b. Characterize the scarcity of recreation opportunities for underserved populations to experience the outdoors as a public health issue and assemble research to advocate the benefits that the outdoors has on individuals' mental and physical health, as well as communities.

"Hiking in the Scapegoat Wilderness" by U.S. Forest Service/ CC BY

Future research

It is important to note that this study has some limitations. First, focus group participants were only a small sample of the campus outdoor recreation programs operating around the United States and currently serving, or aspiring to serve, populations outside their institution. To get a better understanding of campus outdoor programs, their potential and resources needed to serve outside their campus, a more comprehensive study with a larger sample would be beneficial. Most importantly, this study would benefit by reaching out to current and potential participants, specifically those in underserved communities. We recommend that any program who plans on offering programs to this population takes the time to do so. There is a need to better understand what activities people desire and what barriers they currently possess to take advantage of any outdoor recreation activities offered to them.

Conclusion

Campus outdoor recreation programs can play a valuable role in providing outdoor recreation opportunities to historically underserved communities. However, programs that would like to provide these experiences are currently facing challenges and new organizations will likely face similar challenges in attempting to do so. With careful planning and advance work, these challenges can be overcome. Organizations like AORE can provide educational opportunities and advocacy resources to help member programs overcome these barriers. With adequate resources and preparation, campus outdoor programs and their student participants can reap the benefits of providing recreation opportunities to underserved individuals. Outdoor recreation is one tool to create healthier and more rounded communities and we have the chance to be part of this change.

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Directory of organizations

Latino Outdoors
354 Pine Street Suite 700
San Francisco, CA 94104
http://latinooutdoors.org/

Outdoor Afro
2323 Broadway
Oakland, CA 94612
510-306-AFRO (2376)
http://outdoorafro.org/

Outdoors Alliance for Kids
50 F St NW
8th Floor
Washington, DC 20001
202-548-6584
https://outdoorsallianceforkids.org/

Dartmouth Outing Club
119 Robinson Hall
Dartmouth College
Hanover, NH 03755 USA
(603) 646-2428
http://outdoors.dartmouth.edu/doc/

Williams Outing Club
39 Chapin Hall Dr.
Williamstown, MA 01267 USA
413-597-2317
http://woc.williams.edu/

Every Kid In a Park
htttp://everykidinapark.gov

Sierra Club
ICO: Inspiring Connection Outdoors
2101 Webster St, Ste 1300
Oakland, CA 94612
415-977-5568
http://content.sierraclub.org/outings/ico

Children and Nature Network
http://www.childrenandnature.org/initiatives/

American Latino Heritage Fund
http://www.alhf.org/