

8-2014

Examining a Pre-College Wilderness Orientation Experience and Its Role in Facilitating Transitions to College

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EXAMINING A PRE-COLLEGE WILDERNESS ORIENTATION EXPERIENCE
AND ITS ROLE IN FACILITATING TRANSITIONS TO COLLEGE

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management

by
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August 2014

Accepted by:
Dr. Robert Barcelona, Committee Chair
Dr. Denise Anderson
Mr. Dan Anderson

ABSTRACT

Beginning a college career can be an intimidating and rewarding experience. New student stress can be traced back to increases in academic loads and loss of comfortable social circles and habits (Vlamiš, Bell, & Gass, 2011). As a preventative measure to these stressors, universities have increased the number of orientation programs available to incoming students to help ease their transition (Vlamiš et al., 2011). Some universities have also taken steps to implement outdoor experiences into their orientation offerings. These programs generally take the form of extended wilderness trips with varying goals and are increasing at a rate of approximately 10 new programs every year (Bell, Homes, & Williams, 2010). Clemson University Division of Student Affairs and Clemson Campus Recreation developed an outdoor orientation program in 2001, known as CU Outdoors, with the goal of easing the transition into university life for their incoming classes (Kafsky, 2001). However, there has been little systematic evaluation of the program to explore its effectiveness in attaining its goals. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with CU Outdoors participants from the summer of 2013 sessions. These interviews were used to explore whether or not the program is sufficiently meeting the goals set by the programmers. These goals include providing the students an opportunity to develop social groups and friendships prior to the start of classes and to prepare the students for college life. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made to the CU Outdoors and similar programs. The data supported the idea that the program provided the students an opportunity to develop

initial social circles. However, the program did not appear to have a strong influence on the students' preparation for life at a university.

DEDICATION

I'd like to dedicate this work to all students in transition. Starting college can be frightening and to be in a position to help make that transition easier is a true honor. I wish you the best of luck.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I'd like to thank my family for supporting me through my education. I'd also like to thank all of the amazing people I have meet at Clemson and have helped me through this process. Thank you Robert Taylor and my committee members: Dr. Robert Barcelona, Dr. Denise Anderson, and Mr. Dan Anderson. Without your support, this would not be possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE PAGE	i
ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
 CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of Purpose	3
Definitions of Terms	5
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	6
University Orientation Programs	6
Outdoor Recreation	7
Outdoor Orientation Programs	8
College Student Development	13
CU Outdoors	16
III. METHODS	18
Participant Selection	18
Data Collection	19
Data Analysis	19
IV. RESULTS	21
Participants	21
Findings	22

Table of Contents (Continued)

	Page
IV.DISCUSSION.....	31
Conclusions.....	31
Implications.....	35
Limitations	36
Recommendations for Future Research.....	37
Summary.....	39
APPENDICES	41
A: IRB Approval.....	42
B: Participant Contact Email	43
C: Informed Consent Letter	44
D: Interview Script.....	46
REFERENCES	48

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1.1 Demographic Information of Participants	21

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.1	CU Outdoors Logic Model	17

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

When students begin their first semester of college as freshmen, they experience an array of emotions including excitement, uncertainty, and often stress. Common stressors include new classes and the desire to develop new social circles (Vlamiš et al., 2011). Students may even worry if they are the type of person who will enjoy college and experience success. The dramatic series of changes that occur upon matriculation can sometimes be overwhelming. Many universities understand that their incoming students need a way of familiarizing themselves with college life. As a result, many institutions make the decision to implement freshman orientation programs during the summer prior to the students' first year (Perrine & Spain, 2008). Standard summer orientation programs introduce students to aspects of college life that will help enhance their involvement and help them learn the signs and damaging effects of low involvement on their personal and academic development (Astin, 1999). In addition to these standard, more general orientations, a growing number of universities are implementing outdoor orientation programs as a supplemental programming option for incoming students. The first of this type of program was implemented at Dartmouth College in 1935. Dartmouth College continued to be the only institution offering such a program until 1968, when Prescott College began an outdoor orientation program of its own (Gass, 1984). Today, more than 164 colleges and universities are offering outdoor orientation programs to their first year students (Bell, Holmes, & Williams, 2010). Clemson University followed suit and began the CU Outdoors program in 2001 (Kafsky, 2001).

Freshman outdoor orientation programs have increasingly become a more prominent technique to help incoming freshmen transition into university life (Bell et al., 2010). These programs allow incoming freshmen students to put themselves into a novel situation with other new students with the goals of developing relationships and preparing themselves for their university experiences. Unlike typical college orientation programs, these programs give students the opportunity to experience a new and unusual setting with people who are potentially experiencing many of the same emotions. Historically, benefits such as closer social circles and improved social equity have arisen from these programs (Austin, Martin, Mittelstaedt, Schanning, & Ogle, 2009; Kafsky, 2001). There is much empirical data that indicate exposure to a natural environment for recreational purposes can promote improvement in emotional and social functioning (Frumkin, 2012). Additionally, those who participate in outdoor recreation activities and who feel connected to nature are more likely to have a greater sense of well-being (Wolsko & Lindberg, 2013). Outdoor orientation programs seek to facilitate these outcomes in their participating students by providing them an opportunity to engage in outdoor recreation activities. For the purposes of this study, outdoor orientation programs will be defined as extended (approximately one week) overnight wilderness experiences that require small groups to engage in outdoor recreation activities. Unfortunately, there is little empirical data to support the notion that programs like CU Outdoors are meeting the goals set by their universities. These goals include providing the students an opportunity to develop relationships with other students prior to the start of classes and to better prepare the

students for university life. Due to the lack of supportive data, these programs are finding it difficult to position themselves among other student orientation programs.

Statement of Purpose

Little evaluation has been conducted on the CU Outdoors program beyond simple participant-reported post-trip surveys. This has historically been the case for many outdoor orientation programs. In 1995, only half of all outdoor orientation programs in the United States conducted even basic program evaluations (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1996). In-depth qualitative analysis has the ability to determine what student development outcomes are occurring on the trip. The research that does exist shows that these kinds of trips provide students opportunities for social interaction (Austin et al. 2009; Lien & Goldenberg, 2012; Wolfe & Kay, 2011). Therefore, this study seeks to explore how well the CU Outdoors program is meeting the goals of social development and preparation for university life for the participating students.

Outdoor orientation programs allow students to expand upon the knowledge they gained at their standard summer orientations. Bell and Vaillancourt (2011) explain that because students are removed from the technologies and comforts of a modern world, they are more likely to actively engage in discussions and learning opportunities. In addition to increasing their understanding of college life, participants are given the opportunity to meet new students like themselves and develop initial social circles. These programs place students in small groups and require them to rely on each other as they go through the experience together. These experiences can often be difficult for the

participating students. However, with a collaborative group effort, the goals set by the programmers and students are achievable (Kafsky, 2001). Similarly, during this experience students are given a chance to develop relationships with other students who are in the same transitional period, through heavy group cooperation initiatives.

These programs could benefit from an increased amount of research regarding their ability to ease the transition from high school into college. Some of the major factors that impact a student in transition include managing new-found freedom, roommate relationships, academic adjustment, managing money, and making healthy choices (Perrine & Spain, 2008). It is well understood that in standard orientation programs, students are given the chance to meet other students and gain insight into university life. However, there appears to be little empirical data on exactly what outcomes are a result of these programs as related to goals identified as critical to successful transition. This study seeks to evaluate the experiences of the CU Outdoors class of 2013 to explore these and other questions:

1. How has participating in the CU Outdoors program impacted the lives of participating students?
2. Did the CU Outdoors program facilitate the development of friendships with other participants?
3. Do students who participated in CU Outdoors feel they are better prepared for life at Clemson?

One-on-one interviews were conducted with recent participants of Clemson University's outdoor orientation program, CU Outdoors. The data collected in these

interviews have the potential to determine whether or not CU Outdoors has succeeded in easing the transitions of the participating students (e.g academic transition, managing freedoms, roommate relationships). The results of this study have the ability to help these types of programs promote their activities as well as develop the potential to increase funding and acceptance among other, more recognized types of orientation programming.

Definitions of Terms

College Transition: the series of experiences and changes that students face upon entering a collegiate environment.

Student Development: the goals held by many universities in which students are able to grow and become well-adjusted adults.

College Orientation Programs: Measures taken by a university to provide incoming students with the information needed to best experience a smooth transition into a university setting.

Outdoor Recreation: Activities and pastimes that occur in natural environments away from the conveniences of everyday life.

Outdoor Orientations Programs: Educational and recreational trips that require a group of new students to participate in outdoor recreation activities together. These trips require a collaborative effort among the participants to achieve the goals of the group.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

University Orientation Programs

Several studies have identified that the early weeks of transition to a university setting can be critical to long-term university adjustment (Baker & Siryk, 1984; Fox, Zakely, Morris, & Jundt, 1993). This transition generally occurs at the same time that the students are being separated from social bonds and friendships they have established at home (Bell, 2006). Studies have shown a positive relationship between student retention (re-enrollment after the first year of school) and participation in general university orientation programs (Murtaugh, Burns, & Schuster, 1999). A 2008 study by Perrine and Spain found that although pre-semester orientation programs did not have a significant impact on student grade point averages or earned credits, students did identify the programs as being helpful in their transition from high school into college.

Through orientation, students also create friendships and peer groups before beginning their college experience (Devlin, 1996). Peer support has been shown to be an important factor in creating a smoother and easier transition into a university lifestyle (Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996). Generally, developing a close circle of friends is important for most first-year college students. With regard to academic performance, Pascarella (2005) said, “interactions with peers can have a significant influence on first-year intellectual growth.” (pg. 132) Given the understanding that peer influences have a powerful impact on a student’s transition into a university setting (Barefoot, 2000; Bell,

2005), a deeper understanding of how students develop social support is an area worthy of future inquiry.

Outdoor Recreation

As the primary modality, outdoor recreation plays a critical role in outdoor orientation programs. Wilderness experiences can lead to an improved sense of community among participating groups (Breunig, O'Connell, Todd, Anderson, & Young, 2010). The wilderness is an environment in which groups and individuals are able to grow and develop in ways different than in non-wilderness environments (Ewer & McAvoy, 2000).

Several studies have concluded that outdoor recreation activities facilitate an increase in self-efficacy (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1989; Ferguson & Jones, 2001; Kelly, Coursey, & Shelby, 1997; Paxton & McAvoy, 1998; Propst & Koesler, 1998; Richardson, 2003; Sutherland, 2001) Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's ability to identify the necessary course of action that needs to be taken in order to achieve a specific goal or achieve a particular outcome (Bandura, 1998). A previous study conducted by Paxton and McAcoy in 1998 examined 68 participants on Outward Bound courses. They found increases in self-efficacy in three areas (general, interpersonal, and sociopolitical) at both the first post-test immediately following the 21 day course, and at a follow-up post-test six months later. While Outward Bound courses are not programmed specifically for first-year university students, they apply many of the same concepts found on university outdoor orientation trips. For example, Outward Bound trips provide participants with an educational outdoor experience. Both programs provide students

with opportunities to learn new skills and to develop interpersonal relationships with others on the trip. Both Outward Bound programs and outdoor orientation programs seek to harness the developmental power of a wilderness experience for the betterment of the participants. Many similarities can be drawn between these two types of programs despite the differences in their populations and intended outcomes.

Outdoor Orientation Programs

The goal of many outdoor orientation programs is to help incoming students adjust to their new academic and social environments. They address the social environment by providing incoming freshmen a chance to meet and form relationships with other new students and upperclassmen, as well as faculty and staff members (Robinson, Burns, & Gaw, 1996). As of 2010, 164 colleges and universities reported that they offer an outdoor orientation program (Bell et. al., 2010). However, these programs are rarely evaluated for their effectiveness (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1996; Galloway, 2000). Because of the rise in program development, it has recently become important for colleges to evaluate the impacts these types of orientation programs have on their students. Evaluation can help campus recreation departments justify the value of such programs as well as allow for more effective marketing (Galloway, 2000). Additionally, programs that have undergone review and scrutiny are more likely to be acknowledged as legitimate orientation options. Many universities value systematic evaluation of their programs when reevaluating program funding and continuance.

O'Keefe (1989) found three goals shared by many outdoor orientation programs. The first goal is to help alleviate the stresses of transitioning to college by applying outdoor skills, ideas, and experiences to a collegiate setting. The second goal seeks to enable personal growth within the students by increasing their levels of confidence, self-esteem, responsibility, and awareness of their own weaknesses and strengths. Solo experiences, which are often a part of outdoor education, can be very effective in helping participants reach this goal (Bobilya, Kalisch, & McAvoy, 2005). The third goal is to foster a participant's social skills. Through working with other students on the trips, participants are able to find a sense of community while at the same time learning to accept and trust one another (O'Keefe 1989). When placed in a challenging environment with a new group of people, students have the opportunity to grow both externally and internally (Gass, Garvey, & Sugerman, 2003).

The limited studies that have been conducted on outdoor orientation programs have shown that students experience unique external outcomes from participating in these programs, including a better transition to college life (Gass et al., 2003; O'Keefe, 1989). Most outdoor orientation programs are led by upperclassmen who share the responsibility of dispelling myths about college life while mentoring new students and facilitating their experience (O'Keefe, 1989; Troop, 2003; Wardwell, 1999). Program trip leaders are essential for established learning outcomes to be achieved. The trip leaders should be trained in the hard skills necessary for the trip as well as the facilitation techniques needed to help the participating students reach the desired outcomes. It is the responsibility of the programmer to properly train the trip leaders in that curriculum as

well as wilderness experience processing skills. If done correctly, leaders are able to effectively frame and debrief the activities that are conducted on the trip and focus on issues related to the first year student experience (Gass, 1999).

Through orientation, students also create friendships and peer groups before beginning their college experience (Devlin, 1996). Throughout the trip, students learn to relate to one another while growing as a group. The relationships that are formed, when combined with the structure of the program, allow students the chance to develop leadership skills and team skills, as well as confidence as they prepare themselves to take on the challenges of college life (Gass et al., 2003, O'Keefe, 1989).

Outdoor orientation programs can take several forms. These include wilderness/outdoor, recreational, residential, service, or academic (Bell, 2012). Several components are key in nearly all outdoor programs. Programs should occur in new and unfamiliar environments, and consist of small groups (around 7 to 12 participants) led by two or three trip leaders. It is also suggested that these programs should present challenging activities that are aimed at the development of social support amongst the group. The programs can have specific goals and be outcomes-driven as well as relate challenges found on the trip to challenges the students may face in real life (Priest & Gass, 2005; Vlamis, 2002). Several outcomes have been identified as a result of outdoor orientation programs. These include personal growth (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1996), increases in self-efficacy (Jones & Hinton, 2007), and increased retention rates (Gass, 1990). These goals are identical to those achieved by students who attend standard summer orientation programming. Because of this congruence, students are able to

achieve some of the same outcomes in standard summer orientations, but in a novel environment for an extended period of time.

Studies have been done on the long-term effects of outdoor orientation programs. A 2003 study by Gass, et al., found that the students who participated in an outdoor orientation program were all in agreement that the program helped them to take full advantage of their transition to a university. They found some of the outcomes included developing career and personal direction and the creation of friendly relationships with peers. The students indicated that their outcomes were not the result of recreating with others in the outdoors, but were a result of facing challenging situations with their peers, situations that were purposefully built around the desired learning outcomes of the programmers.

According to Bell (2012) there is supporting evidence to suggest that outdoor orientation programs are effective ways of teaching a first year experience curriculum. The evidence shows improved knowledge of academic services and improved critical thinking. Moreover, outdoor orientation programs have the largest effect on a student's connection with his/her peers as well as improving a student's understanding of wellness as a critical component to their quality of life. Like any program that is implemented for the benefit of its participants there are several challenges that programmers must face in order to be successful in their endeavors. These barriers include lack of infrastructure such as facilities, equipment, and staff; cost; risk management practices; and scheduling conflicts with academic calendars set by the university.

Not all outdoor orientation programs are the same, of course. Although outdoor orientation programs share many similarities, some differences related to size and financial support exist in more established programs. These differences are likely due to programs refining themselves. As programs mature, it is logical that they would grow in participation rates as well as offerings (Bell et. al., 2010). Similarly, larger programs have some logistical differences. For example, larger programs have the ability to offer more activities such as backpacking, bike touring, mountain biking, and service projects. Having a large program may simply necessitate a logistical need for a greater variety of activities due to limitations in resources (Bell, et al., 2010). Based on the number of participating students and the activities offered, *CU Outdoors* can be considered a larger program.

The guides in outdoor orientation trips play an important role in the wilderness experience. In their role as social facilitators, guides are encouraged to open up, tell their stories, and interact with participants as friends. For guides this means that socializing and getting to know participants is part of their job responsibilities, as much as the logistical tasks they perform (Sharpe, 2005). Occasionally guides are expected to take on additional social responsibilities with participants who are having difficulty connecting with other participants on the trip (Sharpe, 2005).

It is clear that outdoor orientation programs have the potential to have a significant impact on the freshman experience. Several connections and themes can be drawn between standard orientation programs, outdoor recreation experiences, and outdoor orientation programs. These connections include improved self-efficacy

(Hinton, Twilely, & Mittelstaedt, 2007) as seen in outdoor recreation experiences and outdoor orientation programs, high student retention rates (Gass, 1990) as seen in standard summer orientations and outdoor orientation programs, and personal growth amongst participating students (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1996) as seen in standard summer orientations, outdoor recreation experiences, and outdoor orientation programs. These are all immediate benefits that can be called upon during the first-year college experience, as well as positive outcomes that remain beneficial long into adulthood. This study seeks to evaluate the CU Outdoors program by identifying any influence it may have had on its participants' transitions.

College Student Development

A majority of the research regarding outdoor orientation programs focuses on the changes that occur during the first year of college, though there have been several studies that have aimed to examine the influence of such trips on a student's last few years of education (Gass, 1990). Recent investigations of student development after college have provided further insight into the influence, potency, and richness of how college affects students later in life (Gass, Garvey, & Sugerman, 2003). Recent interest has been concentrated in specific areas, including the relationships among collegiate experiences and psychological development (Martin, 2000), the development of adult identities (Baxter-Magolda, 1999a), the search to find meaning in young adulthood (Baxter-Magolda, 1999b), and ways in which universities can better serve their students to help them develop as adults (Baxter-Magolda, 2002).

As mentioned, there have been several studies on the effect outdoor orientation programs have on an incoming student's self-efficacy. An increase in self-efficacy would most certainly be an advantage in a higher-education setting. Past studies on the link between outdoor orientation programs and self-efficacy have used the Perceived Competence of Functioning Inventory (PCFI), a 16-question survey used to measure self-competence, role competence, and relational competence (Hays & Williams, 2000). A 2007 study by Jones and Hinton found that scores on the PCFI increased both immediately after the outdoor orientation trip as well as eight weeks after the trip, though the increases were not statistically significant except at the eight week post trip interval.

In 1969 Arthur Chickering developed his seven vectors for student development. He chose to refer to them as vectors as students were free to move in and out of them with varying degrees of intensity, progression is not strictly linear. These vectors are: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity. Chickering's model has "stood the test of time as a conceptual lens" (Vlamiis, Bell, & Gass 2011) with Chickering and Reisser (1993) concluding, "Studies seem to be turning up variations in style and sequence, but the fundamental themes reappear and continue to serve as foundations for the seven vectors [of student development]" (p. 35).

In addition to the seven vectors, Chickering also described several environmental influences on those vectors that he referred to as key influences. These influences include institutional objectives, the goals of the organization; institution size, student-

faculty relationships and the varying degrees within; curriculum; teaching, with an emphasis on active learning and cooperation; student development programs and services; as well as friendships and student communities. With regard to student communities, Chickering believes they should “[encourage] regular interaction between students,” “[offer] opportunities for collaboration,” be “small enough so that no one feels superfluous,” “[include] people from diverse backgrounds,” and “[serve] as a reference group” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The CU Outdoors program uses these ideas as a basis for its programming actions. For example, the CU Outdoors experience is shared among a small group of students, usually less than 20 participants. The trip requires that group of students to work collaboratively on tasks that include preparing meals, setting up camp, and supporting one another in the day’s activities. The program typically sees varying levels of outdoor recreation experiences among the group. Through their experience the students are able to rely on one another for emotional support and are able to draw upon the diverse experiences of their fellow participants.

The effect of outdoor orientation programs on student development behaviors and program goals are other areas of importance for researchers. Gass (1987) conducted a study on the University of New Hampshire’s outdoor orientation program *Fireside*. He found that the program had instilled noteworthy positive effects regarding student development behaviors for the participating students. (Vlamiš et al., 2011). Even though all outdoor orientation programs share some common outcomes (e.g, bonding, personal growth), there are some specific program outcomes due to curriculum (Vlamiš, et al., 2011).

CU Outdoors

The CU Outdoors program is an outdoor orientation experience that is conducted during the summer prior to the students' arrival to Clemson University. Facilitated by Clemson Outdoor Recreation and Education (CORE), the program consists of a total of four trips that are implemented during two different weeks, with two trips per week. During each week, one backpacking trip and one basecamp trip are facilitated. The backpacking trips require students to go on a five day hiking trip through the foothills area of Upstate South Carolina, specifically the Foothills Trail. The students will spend each night at a different campsite and during the day will take part in team-building activities and initiatives. The basecamp trips allow students to spend a week at one campsite at Keowee Toxaway State Park, located on Lake Keowee in Upstate South Carolina. While these participants are not hiking each day and spending the night at a new campsite each night, they are provided with other opportunities. Each day, the basecamp participants will take part in a different activity. These activities include hiking, kayaking, and mountain biking. On the final full day of the trip, the backpacking participants will join the basecamp participants at the basecamp where they will all spend one final night with each other. The following day, both groups will be taken whitewater rafting down the Nantahala River in North Carolina. Following the conclusion of the rafting experience, the participants will be brought back to Clemson. The first week of implementation in 2013 was July 29th through August 2nd, the second week was August 12th through 16th. This study will focus on participants from the second week's basecamp

trip. All four trips have room for 20 participants allowing for a potential trip participation rate of eighty students.

The main goals that the university has set for the participating students is providing social development opportunities and easing the transition into the university. In order to program in a way to meet this outcome, the program has been designed in a specific way. For example, by allowing upperclassmen to act as trip leaders on the experience, the incoming students are given a direct resource for gaining an understanding of college life. During the experience, trip leaders are encouraged to ask the participants if they need clarification on any aspect of college. Similarly, participating students are given the understanding that they are free to come to their trip leaders, either privately or in a group, with any concerns they have. Concerns could be as basic as the quality of food in the dining halls, to more serious matters such as course registration and roommate dynamics. The programming logic model for the CU Outdoors program is presented in figure 1-1.

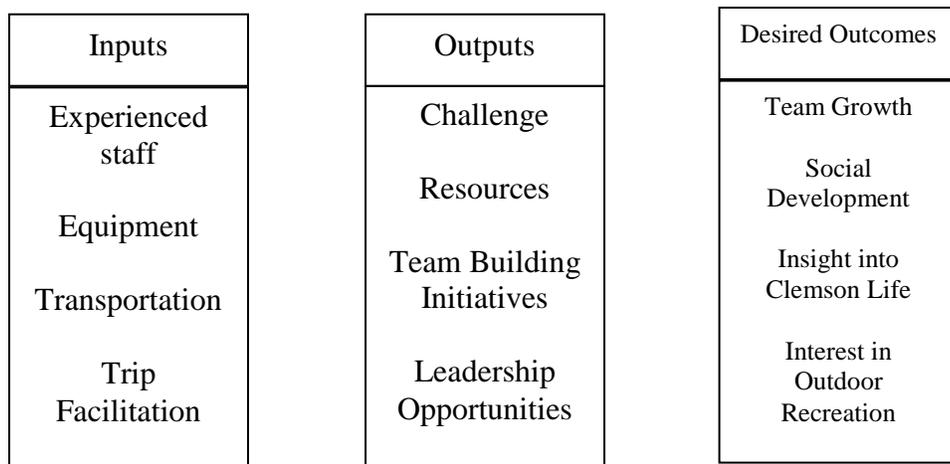


Figure 1-1: CU Outdoors Logic Model

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the CU Outdoors program and its ability to help ease the transition from high school to college for matriculating students. A qualitative approach was used to understand the experiences of the students on the trip, as well as during their freshman year. The methods used in the research are discussed in three sections: Participant selection, data collection, and data analysis.

Participant Selection

At the end of the trip, the students were given a trip evaluation form. This form included a basic participant reported evaluation of the program. At the end of the document, the participants were given the opportunity to indicate their interest in participating in an interview with the researcher to discuss the experience. Initially, this method was used to determine which participants wanted to participate in the study. However, only five students indicated they would be interested. Because of this, the researcher had to implement snowball sampling to recruit additional participants. After the completion of one interview, the researcher would contact another student if their name came up in the previous interview. If no other students were mentioned in the previous interview, then the next research participant was chosen from the list of five students who had previously indicated their interest in participating in the study.

Data Collection

During the experience, the researcher served as a trip leader. At the end of each day, the researcher took field notes discussing any trends noticed that day. These field notes ranged from patterns in social interaction and moods among the students to the day's weather and activities. These field notes were used in the development of an interview script as well as topics to spur conversation with the students. Originally, these field notes were to be used when triangulating the data and developing themes. However, the notes taken proved to be ineffective in that process.

Using the method described above, the participants were contacted to schedule an interview time. A total of seven participants were interviewed, each interview lasting approximately 30 minutes. The conversation primarily followed the interview script. After the interview, the participants were contacted again via email to thank them for their participation.

Data Analysis

The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher during the spring of 2014. The constant comparative method was used to identify common themes among the experiences of the participants. The transcripts were read multiple times and quotes related to the research questions were selected and extracted from the transcripts. Once those quotes were pulled from the transcripts, they were placed into separate documents, each related to a different element of the research questions. One document dealt with social experiences and another dealt with preparation for college life. After those documents were organized, the researcher then reviewed the quotes again to see

what sub categories could be developed within each document. The researcher was able to break each theme down into smaller sub-categories once organized into their specific documents. During this analysis process, the researcher was also looking for discrepant cases where the students indicated they did not experience any of the desired outcomes of the program. Direct quotes have been selected that best exemplify the themes. Follow up member checking was conducted with the participating students to ensure that the researcher accurately reported on the feelings held by the students. The researcher sent a follow up email to the participants with their individual interview transcripts and a synopsis of the themes that the researcher identified. They were asked to provide feedback on how well those themes represented their sentiments and experiences. The three participants who responded to the member checking email indicated that the themes identified by the researcher accurately represented their feelings and experiences.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Participants

Each student who was contacted agreed to participate in the study. In total, three males and four females were interviewed. They were informed that the information they provided in the interview would be used to improve the program. They were all encouraged to give their honest opinions about their experiences and suggest areas in which the program could improve. The participating students have been given pseudonyms to protect their identity. The table below provides contextual information about each participant.

Name	Age	Race/Ethnicity	Hometown
Patrick	19	Caucasian	Charleston, SC
Rachel	19	Caucasian	Hanahan, SC
Greg	19	Caucasian	Marietta, GA
Olivia	19	Caucasian	Greenville, SC
Andrew	19	Caucasian	Clemson, SC
Heather	19	Caucasian	Columbus, OH
Nicole	18	Caucasian	Dayton, OH

Table 1-1: Demographic information of participants.

Findings

Several themes regarding the student experience were identified through the interview data analysis process. The themes were (a) social development and (b) preparation for college life.

Social Development

It appears that the CU Outdoors experience had an impact on the social development of the students. Different types of relationships were developed on the trip. Some students found that they were able to develop friendships that were helpful during the first few weeks of transition. Alternatively, some students indicated that some of the relationships they developed on the trip were able to last longer than the initial weeks of college. Those concepts are presented as (a) Initial Social Circles and (b) Extended-Term Peer Relationships.

Initial Social Circles

A common fear held by many incoming students is the challenge associated with meeting other students and developing friendships. This is particularly challenging for students who are coming into a university setting alone, without any pre-established friendships. The CU Outdoors program seeks to provide its participants with an opportunity to meet and work with other students. The goal is to allow those students to begin to develop relationships. These relationships can endure to varying lengths of times. Some may only last during the week of the trip, while others may last a lifetime. Nearly all of the interviewed students identified that they experienced the development of

an initial group of peer relationships prior to the start of the fall semester. Regarding the benefits of such relationships Greg said:

...I still keep in touch with a few of them, but just having them like, when we got back, it was like the day before we moved in and everything and we were just hanging out. So. Just having those people to hang out with and not just sitting in my dorm by myself was nice. But then like the next week or something, if you're just bored by yourself you actually have already made a friend that you have a connection with or something and you can go talk to them or just hang out with them.

Greg described the benefits of having a group of peers with whom they share a common experience during the first weeks of college. The first few weeks of the freshman experience is a time when students are meeting new people and beginning to develop their own social groups. Greg noted that having an already established group of friends allowed him to have a head start on developing his own social circle.

Nicole identified the psychological advantages of having an initial social circle during the days leading up to student move-in:

The trip definitely made me less nervous because I was already here and met people and like I said, that made me more confident. So that definitely helped. If I just came in with the masses of people, because I got to move in early, the swarms of people would have been just so much stress I feel like. That would have been crazy.

She indicated that because she already had settled into her residence hall and met some of her peers that she was more confident.

Andrew indicated that he references those very same benefits when he recommends the trip to now incoming freshman:

...and I've told all of my incoming friends, I would recommend to anybody that it's be best thing to get you started off, because it kind of gets you into a relaxed mode going into school. Because you've already made friends, but at the same time, you're ready to meet new people with the friends you've already made.

While Nicole felt the trip made her feel confident, Andrew felt the trip helped him stay relaxed during his transition. Because he had already met other students and started developing new friendships, he was able to comfortably take on the challenges that would be facing him.

Extended Term Peer Relationships

In addition to the development of initial social circles, several participants indicated that they were able to transform those initial relationships into more long-term relationships with their fellow students. Relationships ranged from casual friends to academic partners and even roommates. As Patrick stated:

I see Rachel a lot, I see Andrew. It's good to see them; we always have something to talk about. Me and Greg are constantly in communication as far as schoolwork goes, and what are you doing after class. So it's formed some lifelong bonds I'm sure.

On the trip, Patrick had met Greg only to find out later that he and Greg were in the same academic program. They have since been using each other as resources for their schoolwork. Patrick indicated that he and Greg work together on projects and when one of them has a question or does not understand the material, he will go to the other for help. Additionally, Greg indicated that he and Patrick would be living together the following semester.

Additionally, Olivia stated that she met an even larger group of peers through the relationship she developed with Andrew on the trip:

...and I would definitely say that without doing CU Outdoors, I wouldn't have near as big of a friend group as I do now. Because, especially Andrew was one of my best friends on the trip and his birthday was as soon as we got to school for classes and everything. He invited me to his birthday party and I met a whole bunch of new people and now, like, they are a large group of my friends. So without having him, because he already knew a huge group of people, so it definitely expanded my friend group immensely.

Olivia was able to take advantage of one of the relationships she developed on the trip. Through her new friendship with Andrew, she was able to get connected into his pre-existing social group. Situations like this seem to indicate that relationships developed on the trip have more implications than what is readily observable. While Olivia did not develop her current social circle on the trip, she did make a connection with an individual who would directly influence her social group development.

Preparation for College Life

One of the primary goals of the program set by Clemson Outdoor Recreation and Education is to better prepare the participating students for life at Clemson. Students are able to seek insight on the university from the trip leaders. They are given the opportunity to learn what is available to them as well as some of the challenge they may face as students. It appears that the students were able to learn about the surrounding area. However, it seems that some students were able to use the trip leaders as resources better than others. Those ideas are presented below under (a) preparation for recreation and (b) relationships with trip leaders.

Preparation for Recreation

One area in which several students indicated they felt more confident was their understanding of the recreation resources that surround the Clemson campus and community. Heather noted specific areas that were explored on the trip:

And I liked coming to Clemson and people in the area were talking about Jocassee and Toxaway, like know where that was and stuff, I think that helped a lot. Just like getting more familiar with the area so that I can go out on my own. During her interview, Heather indicated that she had not had many outdoor recreation experiences due to her growing up in Ohio. It seems that her CU Outdoors experience had given her confidence to explore the area around Clemson herself and has allowed her to be more open to outdoor recreation in general.

Andrew noted:

... and also to get a feel for the area. Because most people, like lots of students that are freshman won't even do any of that. That we did. Because they don't know about it. Once you do that program, it like, opened up your mind to like being able or like wanting to do stuff throughout your semester.

Andrew feels that one of the major outcomes of the experience was getting a better understanding of what recreation opportunities are available to him and other Clemson students. He believes that a student who comes to Clemson without an experience like CU Outdoors may be oblivious to the recreation opportunities that are within a short distance. The CU Outdoors program lets students experience these wild areas first hand, thus giving them the knowledge necessary to explore those areas again should they choose to do so while studying at Clemson.

This type of insight into the surrounding areas can be very beneficial to new students, particularly those who are coming to Clemson from other states like Heather, Greg, and Nicole.

While many of the students indicated that they had not had many outdoor recreation experiences prior to the CU Outdoors program, others indicated that they have had these types of experiences before. Patrick noted that he had gone whitewater rafting several times before and that he and his father are avid mountain bikers. He even indicated that he would like to share his new-found mountain biking areas with his father:

Yeah, I actually want to take him back to DuPont and show him some of the trails because he would get a kick out of that I think.

Being from Charleston he had not been exposed to the rafting and mountain biking opportunities available to him before participating in CU Outdoors.

Relationships with Trip Leaders

In an attempt to meet programming goals, the student trip leaders are asked to serve as resources from whom the participants can gain information about Clemson. It appears that there were different degrees to which the participating students felt the trip leaders were effective in influencing their matriculation into Clemson

Some students found the trip leaders to be invaluable resources for their transition. As Patrick noted:

The trip leaders were great. They all had great games to play at night, they knew so much about what we were doing during the day, very helpful, could tell you anything about Clemson you wanted to know. Um, so all around, they were just well rounded and prepared. It was really nice to kind of have someone to look up to and talk to especially as an incoming freshman.

It appears that Patrick utilized the trip leaders as resources more effectively than the other participants. He was able to learn about the university. He also indicated that he looked up to the trip leaders as role models. This could have an impact on his remaining time at Clemson. In fact, during the spring semester following the trip, Patrick indicated his interest in becoming a Clemson Outdoor Recreation and Education trip leader himself. Additionally, he registered for Clemson's Outdoor Leadership class in an attempt to

improve his outdoor skills. Perhaps one of the factors that influenced his choice to continue participating in outdoor recreation was his admiration of the trip leaders.

Andrew, who had indicated that he continues to recommend the trip to other incoming students specified that one reason he does so is because of the trip leaders support:

...Because I had a lot of upper classmen that helped me out, and also the trip leaders and people I met. So I think it would be cool to do that for younger people.

He feels that the trip leaders, along with other individuals who he already knew served as a support group for his transitions. As others begin their transitions he would like to serve as a supportive member of such a group for them as well. This may not be in the form of serving as a trip leader but rather simply a supportive friend for those going through what he did the year before.

Conversely, Rachel indicated that she found it difficult to connect with the trip leaders:

If there was like, one thing that was kind of annoying was how the trip leaders were like separated from the people who were in the program. Well, not like separated, but like, it was harder to connect with them that it was with like other people.

She went on to say:

...I didn't know what to ask, but they were there for us to talk to about future stuff, but I didn't know what to ask because I've never, you know, gone to college.

She explains that she knew that the trip leaders were there to provide them with insight into life at Clemson, but she did not know what to ask. When asked if she felt a more formal question and answer session between the participants and the trip leaders would be more beneficial, she indicated that such a conversation would have been a more effective way to learn about the university.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Conclusions

Qualitative methods have been used several times to investigate outdoor orientation programs (Gass, Garvey, & Sugerman, 2003; Wolfe & Kay, 2011;). This type of approach was used in this study in an attempt to reach a deep understanding of the experiences of the participants that occurred on the trip and during their freshman year. This type of insight was necessary for the CU Outdoors programmers to determine what they are currently providing their participants with and what changes could be made to better serve the students.

This analysis has yielded several conclusions. First, the CU Outdoors program appears to be successful in providing incoming Clemson students with an opportunity to develop social circles before the start of classes. Several students from the 2013 trip indicated that they were able to meet other students and begin to develop relationships on the trip. Some of those relationships only lasted the length of the trip. Others lasted through the first few weeks of classes. While others have been sustained and the friendships are just as strong as when they first began. This theme is similar to one of the three themes identified in a 2003 study by Gass, Garvey, and Sugerman. In their study, they found that students who participated in an outdoor orientation program were able to develop peer friendship that served as a social network for the students. Moreover, they found that several friendships continued even after the students graduated and left their

university. It seems that the development of a social group while on the trip is a common outcome for outdoor orientation programs.

Despite the program's effectiveness at helping to facilitate the development of social groups, this analysis also revealed one major challenge facing the CU Outdoors program. It seems that a majority of the students who participated in the trip had a difficult time connecting with the trip leaders. As a result, many of them did not believe they were better prepared for college as a result of the trip. Several attributes have been found to be influential on the relationships between adventure guides and their participants. These include technical ability, interpersonal ability, benevolence, and integrity (Shooter, Paisley, & Sibthorp, 2009). These attributes have been identified as having a significant impact on the level of trust the participants hold in their outdoor leaders. The CU Outdoors trip leaders had two roles. First, they were responsible for safely guiding the participants through the experience. Then, they were to serve as resources for the participants by providing them with insight into life at Clemson. It appears that the trip leaders were effective in meeting their first responsibility, however, the students indicated that they did not learn much about Clemson from the trip leaders. It is possible that the attributes mentioned above (technical ability, interpersonal ability, benevolence, and integrity) are not being displayed by the staff and as a result, the participants are having a difficult time developing the necessary level of trust needed to confide in the trip leaders. If this is the case, CU Outdoors staff training that focuses on those attributes would be beneficial to staff, students, and CU Outdoors program alike. Currently, CU Outdoors staff training does not include a purposeful curriculum on which

to prepare students for life at Clemson. The current staff training focuses mainly on trip facilitation and logistics. A revised training that focuses on student development is essential to achieve the desired outcome of easing transition.

Several studies have indicated an increase in attachment to the university and the development of a sense of place as a direct result of outdoor orientation programs (Austin, Martin, Mittelstaedt, Schanning & Ogle, 2000; Wolfe & Kay, 2011). Several of the students who were interviewed for this study had indicated that they feel attached to Clemson University and feel a strong sense of community within the university as a whole. However, this study was unable to determine if these sentiments are a direct result of the program or if they are the result of some other factor or experience. Other experiences that may have played a major role in developing this sentiment include Clemson's standard summer orientation programming or summer programming for specific populations or Living-Learning Communities in which some participants may have participated. None of the participating students indicated that the CU Outdoors program was more beneficial to them than standard summer orientation programming options.

The three guiding research questions in this study were:

1. How has participating in the CU Outdoors program impacted the lives of participating students?
2. Did the CU Outdoors program facilitate the development of friendships with other participants?

3. Do students who participated in CU Outdoors feel they are better prepared for life at Clemson?

Regarding the first research question it seems that the program has had a slight influence on the lives of some of the participating students. One student has chosen to seek employment in a manner directly related to the trip and the programming organization. Additionally, two participants have determined that they will be roommates for their sophomore year.

The second research question is closely related to the first question as social experiences can have strong impact on an individual's life. The data collected and the themes identified indicate that the CU Outdoors program may have a strong influence on the social experience of students who participate in the program. That influence may be very short term but it can also be influential for the entire freshman year experience. Students indicated expanded social groups and noted the benefits of having a few people they could call upon during the first few transitional weeks of college.

The third research question, regarding preparation for life at Clemson is where the program appears to fall short. None of the participating students indicated that they were specifically better prepared for life at Clemson University than if they had not participated in the program. In fact, several of the participants indicated that they found it difficult to connect with the trip leaders who were to serve as the main source of information about Clemson life. It appears that Clemson Outdoor Recreation and Education can benefit from more intentional programming to meet this very important goal.

Implications

The ideas and themes that have been found in the data can be utilized in several ways. First, the CU Outdoors programmers can use much of the information gathered in this study to provide a higher quality service to students. Because many of the students did not feel that the program better prepared them for college, it is important that the programmers make changes to improve student preparation. Perhaps the development of a curriculum with specific learning goals for the students could be beneficial. By taking a more deliberate, outcomes-based approach, the program will be able to better serve the participating students.

Additionally, institutions that provide a trip similar to CU Outdoors can use the information found in this study to improve their own programs. If a program is currently facing many of the same challenges as the CU Outdoors program, they can implement changes to help address those issues. At the same time, institutions that are in the process of making the decision to implement an outdoor orientation program can use this data to help develop their own program. They may choose to program in a way similar to the CU Outdoor program in an attempt to reach the same outcomes. However, they may choose to make changes to the program in order to address issues such as preparing students for life at their campuses.

This study also has the ability to promote CU Outdoors as a quality experience for incoming students. Prior to this study, little evaluation of the program had been done aside from brief surveys given to the students at the end of the trip. This study took a more in-depth qualitative approach than past program evaluations. Because of this

approach, the themes developed in this study hold more value than what has been determined in the past. Clemson Outdoor Recreation and Education now has a more solid foundation of data on which they are able to market the program and promote it's outcomes. The ability to promote the program in a more effective manner may result in higher participation rates and improved perceived value of outdoor recreation within a university setting.

Limitations

One of the major challenges faced by the researcher in this study was limited researcher experience. It was difficult to conduct interviews that sought to reveal an in-depth dialogue between the researcher and the participants. Deep discussion with meaningful reflection was rarely achieved. Despite this, the researcher was able to extract some meaning from the conversations.

Influenced participant reporting could have led to an inaccurate representation of the experience. Because the researcher also served as a CU Outdoors programmer, it is possible that the participants reported mostly positive aspects of the trip and failed to inform the researcher on things they did not enjoy or felt did not provide them with anything beneficial. In an attempt to prevent this behavior, the researcher began every interview by informing the participant that in order for the program to grow, they would need to indicate the areas they felt needed improvement. Because the interviews revealed several areas in need of attention by the programmers, it appears this technique was effective. However, it is still possible that inaccurate reporting occurred.

Researcher bias also served as a major challenge in this study. The researcher is heavily involved in the CU Outdoors program from the hiring of the trip leaders to the planning an implementation of trip activities. This involvement proved to be a challenge when the researcher attempted to reduce his subjectivity during analysis and reporting. Because of his high involvement, the researcher had a difficult time differentiating between what was actually occurring and what would make the program look like it was meeting the needs of the participants.

This study focused on the experiences of students who participated in the basecamp style trip. A more thorough investigation would have examined the experiences of the students who participated in the backpacking trip as well. The backpacking trip had a total participation rate of 8 students compared to the 20 students who participated in the basecamp trip. As a result, it is possible that different types of relationships could have developed on the backpacking trip that did not develop on the basecamping trip. Because the goal of this research is to evaluate the CU Outdoors program, it would be ideal to understand the experiences of students who participated in the backpacking trip as well. The original goal of this study was to do so, however, none of the backpackers had indicated their interest in taking part in the study.

Recommendations for Future Research

Despite the existence of previous research on outdoor orientation programs, there is still room for more studies to examine these programs more closely (Wolfe & Kay, 2011). This study was focused on one specific program in an attempt to examine its

ability to meet the needs of the students and the goals set by the supporting university. There are several directions future studies could take in order to help develop a better understanding of these types of programs.

Programs such as CU Outdoors could benefit from future research that attempts to identify the underlying cause of the shortcomings of CU Outdoors that were identified in this study. For instance, many of the participants indicated that they did not approach the trip leaders with their concerns about college. An exploration into why they did not do so could be beneficial because it would allow programmers to train their staff in a way that would make them appear more approachable to the participants. Through understanding why a close connection was not developed between trip leaders and students, programmers can make changes to better foster the creation of such a connection. This type of relationship can be very beneficial to the incoming students. Not only will they be able to develop relationships with their peers, but they would also develop a relationship with an upper-classmen. An individual who can show them around campus and connect them to their own peer group can be very beneficial. They have the ability to eliminate a lot of the confusion that a student in transition may develop which may allow them to perform more effectively as a student

As mentioned previously, the friendships and bonds that were developed on the CU Outdoors trip varied in their duration. One interesting area for future research would be an investigation as to why some of those relationships were able to persist longer than others. A longitudinal study that conducts in-depth analysis of those relationships may be able to reveal some unseen factors that influence the varied durations of those

relationships. A longitudinal study could also be conducted to explore the relationship between participation in outdoor orientation programs and college success.

Another study that could help contribute to the existing literature is one that examines student motivations to take part in an outdoor orientation program. During the summer prior to their freshman year, students are provided opportunities to take part in many different types of summer programs. An investigation into what motivates students to participate in an outdoor recreation focused program is a worthy area for future inquiry.

Investigation into a population of students who did not participate in the CU Outdoors program or students who participated in another summer orientation program would be beneficial. Such a study would address the validity concerns and help better identify the root cause of the student outcomes.

Summary

This evaluative study has helped develop some much needed insight into the CU Outdoors program. Much of the information gathered in this study has the ability to help future Clemson Outdoor Recreation and Education programmers provide a higher quality experience for students. They will be able to better provide a program that not only gives students an opportunity to meet other students and develop relationships, but one that is purposefully developed in a way to meet certain defined outcomes. According to the findings of this study, the primary outcome that needs to be addressed is the degree to which students feel they are more prepared to life at Clemson as a result of participating

in the CU Outdoors program. Steps should be taken in developing the program in a way that supports this outcome.

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of the 2013 CU Outdoors participants. The intent was to explore several questions regarding their social development and preparation for college. Through the interview process it is clear that social development is occurring, however preparation for university life is not occurring at the levels desired by the programmers and Clemson University. The general understanding of these types of programs would benefit from more qualitative and quantitative analysis of programs that are similar to CU Outdoors as well as those that are designed differently.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

IRB Approval

Dear Dr. Barcelona,

The Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) reviewed the protocol identified above using exempt review procedures and a determination was made on March 13, 2014 that the proposed activities involving human participants qualify as Exempt under category B2, based on federal regulations 45 CFR 46. The approved consent document is attached for distribution. Your protocol will expire on September 30, 2014.

The expiration date indicated above was based on the completion date you entered on the IRB application. If an extension is necessary, the PI should submit an Exempt Protocol Extension Request form, <http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/forms.html>, at least three weeks before the expiration date. Please refer to our website for more information on the extension procedures, <http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/guidance/reviewprocess.html>.

No change in this approved research protocol can be initiated without the IRB's approval. This includes any proposed revisions or amendments to the protocol or consent form. Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects, any complications, and/or any adverse events must be reported to the Office of Research Compliance (ORC) immediately. All team members are required to review the "Responsibilities of Principal Investigators" and the "Responsibilities of Research Team Members" available at <http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/regulations.html>.

The Clemson University IRB is committed to facilitating ethical research and protecting the rights of human subjects. Please contact us if you have any questions and use the IRB number and title in all communications regarding this study.

Good luck with your study.

All the best,

Nalinee

Nalinee D. Patin

IRB Coordinator

Appendix B

Participant Contact Email

Hello,

My name is Michael Willett and I am the graduate assistant for Clemson Outdoor Recreation and Education. Last summer, you and several other incoming freshmen joined us for our CU Outdoors program. I am very interested in learning more about not only your experience on the trip, but also the experiences you've had during your first year here at Clemson.

If you are able, I would love to sit down with you and have a conversation about these experiences. The information I gather from our conversation will help CORE provide the best possible experience for future participants.

Please respond if you are interested and we can schedule a time and location to meet that is most convenient for you.

Thank you very much,

Michael Willett

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Information about Being in a Research Study

Clemson University

Examining a Pre-College Wilderness Orientation Experience and its Role in Facilitating Transitions to College

Description of the Study and Your Part in It

Michael Willett and his advisor, Dr. Robert Barcelona, are inviting you to take part in a research study. Michael is a graduate student at Clemson University, running this study with the help of Dr. Barcelona, a faculty member in the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management. The purpose of this research is gain an understanding of what, if any, impact the CU Outdoors experience has had on your transition into college.

Your part in the study will be to take part in an interview with Michael to describe your CU Outdoors experience as well as your experiences during your transition to college. Your interview will be audio-recorded to ensure that the information you provide is interpreted accurately.

It will take you about 45 minutes to be in this study.

Risks and Discomforts

We do not know of any risks or discomforts to you in this research study.

Possible Benefits

This research may help us to better understand what these types of programs offer students, and how we can improve them to enhance student experiences.

Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy and confidentiality. We will not tell anybody outside of the research team that you were in this study or what information we collected about you in particular. You will be given a pseudonym for all oral and written reports. Transcriptions of your interview will be kept on an external hard drive until all reporting is complete. At that time the hard drive will be erased.

Choosing to Be in the Study

You do not have to be in this study. You may choose not to take part and you may choose to stop taking part at any time. You will not be punished in any way if you decide not to be in the study or to stop taking part in the study.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Dr. Robert Barcelona at Clemson University at (864) 656-1891 or by e-mail at rbj@clemson.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights in this research study, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-6460 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside of the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC's toll-free number, 866-297-3071.

A copy of this form will be given to you.

Appendix D

Interview Script

Life History

Tell me little about yourself.

Where are you from?

How old are you?

What sparked your interest in Clemson?

Earlier in the summer, how were you feeling about starting college in a few months?

What were your fears?

What were you anxious about?

What were you excited about?

What kind of outdoor recreation experiences had you had prior to August of last year?

Details of Experience

Do you remember your CU Outdoors Experience?

How did you hear about the program and get involved?

What can you tell me about your CU Outdoors experience this past year?

What was your favorite part of the experience?

Tell me something that was challenging for you.

Tell me something that you were surprised about during the experience.

Was this past summer your first time camping/kayaking/mountain biking/backpacking?

Reflection on the Meaning

How often do you think back to your CU Outdoors experience?

What part of the experience has stuck with you the most? Why?

How do you feel about your fellow participants?

Do you keep in contact with anyone you met on the trip?

Would you participate in a program like this again?

What about your experience contributes to this?

What has your experience at Clemson so far?

How are you doing academically?

What are your social experiences like?

What student organizations are you involved in?

Those things you indicated as your fears or those things you were anxious about.
How do you feel about them now?

Have you kept with any of the activities you experienced on the trip?

How likely are you to take part in outdoor adventure activities again?

How likely are you to take part in a CORE trip again?

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