

## History of the Outdoor Pursuits Program

### 1979

Jim Blanchard was hired as Coordinator of the newly renamed Adventure Pursuits Program in the Department of Physical Education and assigned the task of developing a broad-based outdoor activities program. In its initial configuration, the Program included:

- An entry course Wilderness Ethics and Safety, designed to address most of the safety and environmental topics common to all outdoor activities,
- A series of classroom-based 'Preparation' courses that focused on teaching information, skills, and concepts specific to each activity,
- And a series of outing courses that provided opportunities for practicing skills and developing field experience.

The courses were taught by Jim or by one of several Graduate Teaching Fellows (GTF's), with optimal field instructional ratios achieved through extensive use of student and community volunteers. Very quickly it was evident that the availability of qualified leaders was the principal limitation to adding courses to the curriculum.

### 1980

Principles of Outdoor Leadership added to the curriculum in order to develop the skills and experience of outdoor leaders assigned to assist with field outings.

An outdoor pursuits 'Specialization' was introduced that combined the Principles of Outdoor Leadership course, several outdoor skills courses and a set of practicum experiences. The Specialization was designed to provide students with a well-rounded exposure to outdoor pursuits activities and an introduction to outdoor pursuits leadership.

A more comprehensive Leadership Program was initiated to provide a structural framework for training students to become outdoor pursuits instructors. The Leadership Program was designed to combine the best elements of nationally respected outdoor leadership programs in the United States with those of several European programs. The Program consisted of skills acquisition, leadership training, and field experience, followed by comprehensive written and skills examinations. The Leadership Program was an immediate success, and soon became an essential part of the Adventure Pursuits Program. After only a year of operation it was possible to simultaneously add courses and reduce the level of dependence on community volunteers to staff field outings.

### 1981-1983

Over the next few years the Program grew steadily. Courses were modified, and offerings were adjusted in response to student interest and demand as well to address the needs of the Leadership Program. The name 'Adventure Pursuits' (a common British term for outdoor adventure programs) was changed to the Outdoor Pursuits Program (OPP). Note: activity courses within the PE Department (everything from rock climbing to swimming, basketball, etc.) are under the umbrella of the 'Service Physical Education' (SPE) segment of the Department.

### 1984-1985

Michael Strong hired as a GTF in the PE Department and teaches a variety of land-based OPP courses, including rock climbing, backpacking, ski touring, and mountaineering.

### **1986**

Michael Strong hired as the Water-Based Coordinator of Outdoor Pursuits. From the beginning, the OPP had a distinct land-based focus. The hiring of a water-based coordinator enabled the OPP to expand its course offerings. Newly minted courses included two levels of whitewater rafting, canoeing, sailing, two levels of windsurfing, and whitewater kayaking. Mountain biking was also added to the curriculum.

### **1987 - 1991**

During this time period the OPP offered a rich blend of land, water and snow-based activities. Popularity and participation grew and Jim and Michael prepared documents for the inclusion of a Minor in Outdoor Pursuits Leadership in the Physical Education Department (one of the Departments in the College of Human Development and Performance). The Minor is approved in the early 1990's.

In 1990 Ballot Measure 5 was passed by Oregon voters. The measure established limits on Oregon's property taxes, significantly impacting school funding in Oregon at all levels of education. Faced with an immediate and unprecedented budget shortfall, the University elects to eliminate the degree offering Departments in the College of Human Development and Performance. The Minor dies a quick death and the Physical Education Department is blown up and several people, including Michael have their positions terminated. Michael's last term in the Department is Winter Term 1992.

### **1992-1993**

The Physical Education Department retracts. Activity courses are preserved and offered under a newly named Program titled Physical Activity and Recreations Services (PARS). Jim operates a 'bare bones' Program and works hard to keep the Program functioning. I cannot remember when the Department became PARS. I'm guessing here. Peg would probably know.

### **1994**

The PE Department receives approval for a .5FTE position in Outdoor Pursuits. Michael applies for the position and is rehired. Within a year he has earned a full-time position by introducing new courses (and revitalizing some previously dormant ones) into the OPP curriculum. The Leadership Training Program is reconfigured and its structure mirrors (in terms of credits required) the Minor in Outdoor Pursuits Leadership that never came to fruition in the early 1990's.

### **1995 – 2000**

These years were relatively stable ones for the OPP. The Program thrived. Some new courses were offered, others terminated. The Leadership Training Program began issuing certificates of completion beginning in 1998. Several individuals completed previous versions of the Leadership Training Program in previous years, but no records exist of these people's accomplishments. By the end of the 2018 academic year, 183 leadership certificates were awarded.

### **2000**

A new Student Recreation Center opens and one of the inclusions is an indoor climbing wall, enabling the OPP to offer climbing courses every term, rather than just spring and fall terms. Michael's F.T.E. in Outdoor Pursuits is

adjusted downward (.7) so that he can manage the indoor climbing wall. Dustin Dawson assists Michael as a GTF and assumes the assistant coordinator position.

## **2002**

One of the most financially significant set of courses, the Alpine Skiing and Snowboarding Program is terminated as a result of several significant injuries to snowboarders during the recreational component of the day on the slopes (Thursdays for 8 weeks in winter term). Snowboarding grew in popularity over many years (mid 1980's onwards). Younger participants ditched skiing for snowboarding, and the impact to our Program was a significant reduction in participation by students in cross-country skiing and ski touring courses. Participation diminished significantly over many years until it became apparent that these courses needed to be shelved. Michael is not bitter about this (yeah right!). Fortunately, the addition of a steady stream of rock climbing courses at the indoor climbing wall contributed to the financial bottom line of the OPP.

## **2003-2004**

Jim announces his retirement, effective at the end of fall term 2003. Beginning Winter Term 2004 Michael assumes responsibility for directing the operations of the OPP, and Jim opts to continue teaching on a part time basis (.5 F.T.E). Michael takes over the Wilderness Survival course from Jim during Winter Term 2004. The Department approves a search for a split-appointment faculty position to fill the void created by Jim's reduced teaching load. In Spring Term 2004, Dan Crowe is the committee's choice to manage the rock climbing wall and teach select OPP courses starting in Fall Term 2004. Michael's appointment is fully within the OPP.

## **2009**

Jim retires at the end of Spring Term 2009. His position is not replaced, and Michael reconfigures most of the backcountry courses and the Leadership Training Program. When Jim was teaching, there was a series of 'Preparation' courses which preceded the outing courses. For example, in fall term a 1-credit Backpacking Preparation course preceded the 1-credit Backpacking Navigation. Backpacking Preparation was also required of Backcountry Survival participants. In winter term, a 1-credit Snow Camping Preparation course was required in order to take the 1-credit Snow Camping Outing course, etc.

Michael opted to create a series of 2-credit experiences, eliminated the 1-credit Preparation courses. Examples of 2-credit experiences include Backpacking, Backcountry Navigation, Snow Camping, Avalanche Safety, Mountaineering, Vertical Rescue Techniques and Outdoor Rock Climbing. Several 1-credit courses remained including Swift Water Safety, Backcountry Survival. Basics of Technical Rescue was a 1-credit course that was converted to a 2-credit course in Fall Term 2017.

## **2015**

The new Student Recreation Center opens and includes a state-of-the-art bouldering wall. Bouldering courses are introduced into the curriculum and have been steadily growing in popularity. Michael opts to reconfigure the three-credit Professional Development courses into two-credit experiences. Adventure Education becomes Leadership Dynamics (Fall Term), Principles of Outdoor Leadership becomes Field Leadership (Winter Term), and Environmental Education becomes Leading in Nature (Spring Term).

## **2017**

The need for additional staff support to assist Dan in managing the operations of the indoor climbing wall was apparent prior to the opening of the new Student Recreation Center. The influx of climbers, especially boulderers made managing the climbing wall even more difficult for Dan. A Rock Wall Coordinator position was approved, and

Kristin Gloystein was hired into the position effective Spring Term 2017. Dan's F.T.E. was readjusted, enabling him to teach .8 F.T.E. of OPP courses. He maintains a .2 F.T.E. to supervise Kristin and assist with rock climbing wall tasks.

**2018**

Michael announces his retirement, effective at the conclusion of Spring Term 2019. Michael recommends that Dan assume the leadership of the OPP upon his retirement. The Department supports this recommendation,.