The Tent Pég

Finding Yourself – Alex Hall

Following in the Footsteps – Jordan Davis

More Than Just Park Service – Kailanne Burleson

A Christmas Eve Tradition – Tommy Connell
Raynor Ward, Erin Baker, Kailanne Burleson, and Hana Miller
Note From The Editors-
The Fall 2015 publication of the Tent Peg has a compilation of articles from Park & Recreation Management students and each faculty member. Our goal was to give a balanced view of the opportunities in this program. Organizing this publication requires hours of reading and working. Just as the sun rises each morning, may the articles encourage you to go out, make the best of each day and the best of this wonderful program.

Special thank you to all that submitted articles. Thank you to Andrew Bobilya for allowing us to have the opportunity to compile this publication. Thank you to Debby Singleton, Ben Tholkes, and Maurice Phipps for all the amazing and wonderful things you do for this program.
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The Empowerment of Nature — Mackenzie Boone

Ralph W. Emerson, an American poet of the 1800’s, once said that “Flowers... are a proud assertion that a ray of beauty out values all the utilities of this world.” This famous transcendentalist captured an important truth, that there will always be beauty available to see, but like many other poets, strives for people to truly experience it through the chaos of the world.

As an analytical thinker, sometimes with the price of getting trapped within cyclical thoughts, my most efficient communication comes through arts; through poetry; through writing. When I discovered this, almost immediately these thoughts expressed were continually centered on nature.

Before I really grasped this route of communication, I quickly came to the realization that it took more than just talking about scenery for others to really experience nature. It wasn’t about looking at a landscape, flower, mountain, or trees; it was about experiencing and feeling the beauty wrap around you.

The most exquisite aspect of art is that everyone perceives this splendor differently. It’s the same reason that pieces of artwork like Claude Monet’s paintings are looked at a thousand times over and shared with the world; the magnificence within it holds a different meaning to each set of eyes that not only sees or reads it, but experiences it.

Artists such as Emerson and Monet learned the secret of powerful pieces; that they had to be centered on unforgettable beauty. In programs such as the Park and Recreation Management department, we have a direct connection with this secret weapon; we are equipped with the ability to share this with everyone around us. Western North Carolina offers an ample amount of resources to explore landscapes and mountainous terrain and escape the tedious demands of routine.

Whether we write about nature through poetry experience it in expeditions, or simply respect its raw form, we can begin to communicate and reveal this beauty with those trapped in the chaos of this world.


Soft kisses of the bloom,
Fresh air through the lungs,
Grasping towards beauty,
A journey to the soul.
Discovering Western North Carolina—Daniel Csizmadia

When I moved to the Southern Appalachian Mountains to start my career at WCU three years ago I knew this area was special. I grew up in Greenville, South Carolina, which is about a two-hour drive south of Cullowhee in the foothills of these mountains. Thankfully my parents had me hiking at an early age in areas closer to Greenville. Naturally as I got older and my friends and I were able to drive we would venture off to spots close to Jackson County and Cullowhee like Pisgah and the Chattooga River. It wasn’t until getting the chance to actually live in this beautiful area that I realized how amazing it truly is. Over the past three years I’ve explored Western North Carolina as much as possible with fervency to find everything it has offer.

At the beginning of fall this year I was lucky enough to backpack on the Bartram Trail over a long weekend. This trail starts in Georgia and extends into North Carolina in the Highlands area and reaches up past Franklin and the Nantahala Gorge, ending at Cheoah Bald. The trail has about 30 miles in Georgia and about 70 in North Carolina. The section my friend and I decided to take on is a 30-mile stretch starting at the Duke Energy Power Plant trailhead and ending at Wayah Bald. We decided to park my friend’s car at the Wayah Bald access point and then drive another to Duke Power allowing us to travel south. The Duke Energy trailhead is right across the street from the Nantahala River commercial rafting put-in. My friend and I both guided on the river this summer so we were excited about going the opposite way from the part of the river we spent all summer on and exploring the part of the Nantahala that no one really sees. If you think the part you raft on is gorgeous you should see this part of Nantahala National Forest.

Our first day we made our way up to Rattlesnake Bald and set up camp a couple miles past it, totaling about nine miles. The first half of the day we were surprised because we were expecting rain but instead we enjoyed lovely, sunny September weather. All of a sudden clouds rolled in and the sky opened up and we were forced to hike on a trail that resembled a small creek. Neither of us allowed this to affect our morale, or our “expedition behavior” as some would say. We were just stoked to be having this adventure in an area that we had wanted to explore for a while. It really was an interesting experience being high up in the mountains that towered over me all summer as I rafted on the Nantahala River. After all we were in one of our country’s only true rain-forests.

The next day was even more scenic as we hiked along the cascades and made our way to Lake Nantahala, getting a chance to swim in it for the first time. This is the highest lake in elevation in all of North Carolina and is definitely one of the most beautiful. The water was refreshing blue color and felt amazing. Next we climbed up to Jarrett Bald, probably the most difficult part of the 30 miles. It was a rough ascent and hefty increase of elevation but the campsite on the map was right at the top of the ridge overlooking the lake. One of the coolest campsites I’ve ever been lucky enough to be at. The next morning we started early and made it all the way to Wayah Bald, the highest point of the Bartram Trail, at an elevation of 5,342 feet. Both these last two days were absolutely perfect weather and the views were even better. Everyone that visits Western North Carolina should check out Wayah Bald. I’ve traveled to a fair amount of places in North and Central America and this view is one of those that prove to me that NC is more than special.

The more I live in the Southern Appalachian Mountains in North Carolina the more I feel fortunate and appreciative of these majestic landscapes. There’s something about the biodiversity of these forests that makes them irresistible to me. Where else do rhododendron and laurel thickets mysteriously and suddenly become a patch of tulip poplars, maples, sycamores, and oaks as you walk further down the trail? Where else can one walk for miles and miles along the beautiful orange and yellow blossoms of jewelweed? (The only plant I know of that turns silver in running water). The Bartram Trail is only one example of a North Carolina paradise that I have the option of escaping to. Western North Carolina has dozens upon dozens of hidden secrets like the Bartram Trail but it’s only once you start exploring that your life starts to change. Western North Carolina wilderness has much more to offer than picturesque forests with lakes, rivers, and waterfalls. Now get out there to find out for yourself.

There are numerous access points to the Bartram Trail. Across the street from the commercial rafting put-in on the Nantahala River is a Duke Energy Power Plant and there is a yellow blaze for the Bartram Trail there. When I hiked on the Bartram Trail we parked a car there and another one at Wayah Bald.
Irish Exchange—Jarek Majkusiak

I arrived at the WCU campus at 2am in the morning on the 12th of August. I was very disoriented after over a thirty hour journey. It was also just over forty hours since I had slept. I had a lot of complications on the way including flight cancelation, lost luggage and questionable airline meals. I am sure that most of you can relate to those issues, but for me it all happened in just one journey. As soon as I saw the statue of the Catamount I completely forgot about the journey. I remember the feeling of excitement and this hard to explain uplifting feeling that we experience when something that we really wanted has come into realization. From that moment all those frustrations from months of preparations, hard work and problematic airline professionalism went away. I was finally at WCU and it was all that mattered in that moment. That night I fell asleep with my window open listening to the soothing music played by the crickets in the woods outside. This might sound strange for someone who grew up in the south, but to me it was a lullaby that I had never heard before.

Next morning I woke up to see one of the most beautiful places I have been to in all of my travels. Spectacular green mountains that reminded me of the north of Thailand and Laos, clear blue sky, light mist just at the bottom of the valley and in the middle of all of this — my university. Mornings like these stay in the memory for a long time. That morning I became a Catamount and my color was purple.

During my first few days at WCU I met a lot of interesting people and learned to live in a new place. But most of all I have experienced a lot of generosity. People here expressed genuine interest in me and the other international students, and their willingness to help was incredible. I also really enjoy people’s reactions when they hear me speak for the first time. I should explain here that I grew up in Poland and moved to Ireland over ten years ago. My accent is a weird mixture of influences from both cultures and it often takes people by surprise. The reactions however, were never negative and often lead to great conversations.
This could be your experience as well. As a WCU student you have an opportunity to study abroad in many places of the world. I won’t name all of the countries you can go to on the student exchange but the list is longer that any of you might expect. The University I come from is in Ireland and at this point I would like to invite you to consider going abroad to discover this beautiful country. As a student at Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology you will have a chance to discover how great of a country Ireland is. You will see a lot of great scenery and meet a lot of people who will be willing to entertain you and help you during your year abroad. The Outdoor Education Program at GMIT is designed to mix the academic study and skills training in adventure sports. The range of activities on the course is impressive – rock climbing, sailing, windsurfing, powerboating, kayaking and mountain biking. You will also have a chance to take part in many activity trips around Ireland and other countries like Spain, Wales, Croatia and Slovenia.

If you decide to go abroad, no doubt you will encounter problems on the way and there will be days where you will wonder “...if all of this is actually worth it?” Visa processes might be hard, the journey could be long and problematic. When you get there you will miss your family and friends. But you will also learn a great deal about yourself and you will test your abilities. Thriving in the culture that you are not born into is a skill, but it’s one that is worth learning.

So to answer the question, “Is it worth it?” I strongly believe the answer is “yes”.

Students who are interested in spending a year studying at GMIT in Ireland should contact WCU-GMIT exchange coordinator Dr. Andrew Bobilya to discuss your interest in the program. Students from WCU attend a full year at GMIT and pay WCU tuition fees plus any fees for board and travel.

For more information on the WCU study abroad: www.studyabroad.wcu.edu

For more information about GMIT Outdoor Education Programme:
http://www.gmit.ie/outdoor-education/bachelor-arts-outdoor-education-and-leisure

For more information about Ireland: http://www.discoverireland.ie/
Studying Abroad—Fian McCabe

If you told me last year that I would be studying over 3,700 miles away from my home town I would have probably started laughing. The idea of spending such a long time in another country away from friends and family seemed like something I wouldn't be interested in. Having to spend all that money on a visa, transportation, meal plans (which was something I had never experienced before) as well as accommodation and college fees didn't seem worth it. However, this was at the start of the college year and I can now safely say having moved to Western that I was completely wrong!

While studying in college during my first year back in Ireland I found out about an opportunity to study at Western Carolina University during my second year. This peaked my interest but I wasn't really considering it. I later got in contact with people who had been on the exchange the year before and after a few months I finally decided to apply and get accepted. At this point I started to get nervous about what to expect as the only time I had ever been out of the country was on family holidays for a few weeks at most.

Documentation and traveling was a nightmare at times. The amount of paperwork required was crazy. Myself and the one other Irish student must have been very unlucky the day we were traveling over from Ireland. During the 7 hour flight from Dublin to Newark I found out the monitor in front of me was broken which left me with my laptop which had limited music and no movies as it was new and my phone which I needed to keep the battery. After arriving into Newark we discovered that our flight to Asheville was cancelled. Eventually after going to Atlanta first we arrived in Asheville 27 hours after leaving Dublin. To make matters worse we didn't get our bags until two days after we arrived.

Up until now my experience of studying abroad was that it was expensive, tiring, boring and very annoying. This all changed however. After orientation week I began my classes and started to get to know my lecturers and other students. My fear of how hard it would be to adjust to the American way of college disappeared after the first few days as I quickly got to grips with the timetable and where everything was based. It was still early days into my new adventure but after an eventful start it was beginning to look like something I would really enjoy.

Many people who are considering studying abroad probably have some type of expectation on the
country and the type of life over there before even setting foot in that country. I know this was true for me. However, what is most likely the case (unless you have already been there) is that this expectation is shaped by media and what you hear from other people or see on TV. Some of these may be true, but from what I have experienced I now know not to pay attention to many of these stereotypes.

Studying abroad and actually attending a college in a different country offers a more realistic view on the people and culture in whichever country you are in. If I were to visit North Carolina with friends or family and travel around it for a few weeks I would see a lot. However, what I wouldn't experience is the true culture in the area. I may get a very small taste of it but because I would be a tourist I would do the type of things tourists do in different countries. Actually living and studying in the country means that you get to view the surrounding area and experience the new culture as the locals do. I know I have been to a lot of places with friends that I wouldn't have gone to if I were on a holiday and I'm sure I will be doing a lot more before I leave. This gives you a better overall experience I think and is one of the best things about studying abroad.

Studying abroad also gives you the unique opportunity to connect with people at a different level than if you were to just meet them while on holiday. While living in another country and studying there you are always surrounded by other students that are also attending the same college. This gives you a connection with these people that I don't think you get when you travel a lot and meet new people for a few days. The fact that you are spending time in another country studying with others gives you a chance to form lasting friendships over a longer period of time too. As an international student, I know that you spend time with other internationals because you have that same connection but after some time you begin to make friends with everyone. I know for me so far I have been lucky enough to make friends which I hope to stay in contact with when I go back to Ireland. I think this is another huge advantage to studying abroad.

Jobs. This is why we study in the first place, so we can have a good job. I can't speak from experience but I have heard many people say to me that studying in another country makes you very employable later when you finish your studies. While studying abroad you will have experienced different things that others in your line of work may not have experienced and this is what employers will be looking for. I know that I have learned some skills since I have been here that my college back home does not teach. In addition, I will be able to get certain qualifications that my college back in Ireland does not offer.

So far studying in Western Carolina University has been one the best experiences I have ever had and I cannot wait to see what the rest of the year has in store. Studying abroad wasn't the easiest thing to do and to get everything in place to allow this to happen was hard at times. However, I know that I would have regretted not coming over and that it was worth all the confusion with all the documents and the bad traveling experience to be able to say I lived and studied abroad.

If studying abroad sounds like something you would be interested in WCU has a very good exchange program with Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT). This is the college I go to back home. Parks and Recreation Management at WCU sends over students every year to GMIT and GMIT sends over students from their Outdoor Education degree. If you are interested in taking part in this exchange program then talk to your academic advisor, they will be happy to help. I might also add that this particular course in Ireland (Outdoor Education) offers fantastic opportunities to experience the Irish landscape first hand.
Landmark Learning—Justin Padgett

We are pleased to announce that many Landmark Learning courses for outdoor leaders are approved for college credit at Western Carolina University. Summer coursework is available through Western Carolina's Continuing Education Department for a rate of $55 per credit hour. Landmark Learning is the first nationally accredited School of Higher Education in the United States to focus on national certification trainings for the outdoor industry. Landmark's 40-acre mountain campus is located approximately 4 miles from WCU in Cullowhee. Since 1996, our focus has been to educate persons who work and play outdoors in emergency medicine, water rescue skills, canoe and kayak instructor certification, and Leave No Trace.

For more information on Landmark Learning Programs like the 40-day/12 credit hour multi-certification Landmark Outdoor Educator Semester, or Wilderness First Responder (WFR) 9 day/4 credit hour course offerings in Cullowhee, please visit our web presence www.landmarklearning.edu. Stay tuned for an update on the WCU WFR Fall Break 2016.

Skill is The Market—Krista LaPlante

The Parks and Recreation Management program offers a lot to their students. In the one and a half semesters I have been a part of this program I have learned valuable skills and information that will be readily applied in the work place. Skills such as learning how to facilitate groups, leadership, team work, communication within groups, detailed programming and evaluation, marketing, interpersonal relations, understanding the development and future of Parks and Recreation and so on. This program does equip students for success in their major.

However, I am starting to see an area that could use a perspective from a different vantage point. Or some might argue, “disadvantage point”. The concentration within the program, outdoor leadership, may be missing some vital needs for this particular group of PRM students. The question becomes, “will I be a marketable outdoor leader with what I have learned here at Western Carolina?”

I feel readily equipped to take on administrative and management roles within the industry and I know that in a year from now that confidence will only grow as it has in so many other PRM graduates. But what about working in the field? As I search for my capstone internship I find the goals ahead far off due to the lack of physical skill and ability, things I know I can learn in a timely manner. To gain these skills one must walk out of Western’s doors, take the initiative and devote the time and money to an outdoor organization. However, I do think we could bring our outdoor leaders home by offering what they needed to gain these skills.

Western’s PRM program truly does give their outdoor leadership students a strong start in the field with classes like PRM 254 Intro to Outdoor Pursuits, Wilderness First Aid and Wilderness First Responder classes, PRM 425 Land Based Outdoor Pursuits, and PRM 426 Water Based Pursuits. These are all needed and beneficial classes, but they do not place the WCU PRM student ahead of any other outdoor leader without a complementary skill. What is needed is some more intensive skill building classes. As PRM students we know how to plan a program, we know how to facilitate and lead a group, we know how to practice safety and good judgement, now all we need to stand at the top of the market is to be above proficient in an outdoor activi-
Following that thought, our program does see this need and has made an effort to give this to their students. One particular class that that has made its way back into the PRM electives after a five-year hiatus is the PRM 427 Wilderness Education course, which last year gave students the opportunity to learn and use leadership skills on a nine-day wilderness experience. PRM 427 is also held in different locations throughout the country providing students with opportunities to develop different technical skills. This is one course that prepares its students to be an outdoor leader, qualifying them to receive a certificate in outdoor leadership through the Wilderness Education Association. Also, the new PRM 493 Outdoor Living and Expedition skills course will be coming to WCU this coming semester which will give students a foundation of basic living and expedition skills.

In addition to the PRM 427 course, this spring, two outdoor leadership focused classes PRM 433 Outdoor Instruction and PRM 321 Interpretation and Environmental Education will be offered. Credit is also offered for a student to get field experience through other outdoor agencies. With Western’s new agreement with Landmark Learning, Parks and Recreation Management students will be able to take Landmark’s courses such as Wilderness First EMT for credit. However, that experience is not offered through WCU and does come with its financial costs. This is the argument and the proposition at hand; WCU should offer their PRM students intensive skill building classes.

Finding Yourself—Alex Hall

Many Parks and Recreation Management students just like me love being outside because it gets them away from reality, even if it only for a little while. Since this is my last year in this program I have realized that being able to go out in the wilderness and relieve some stress is more important than ever. College students have enough stress on them already ranging from being a full-time student, working a job and even relationships. Being able to take time out of their busy schedules to have some “you time” is important to any college student, not just Parks and Recreation majors. I believe that if each student at WCU would take at least 30 minutes a week to just go and enjoy being outside then it would relieve a lot of built up tension and stress.

I’m telling you all of this because I found my inner self during a hike one day through Panther town Valley in the Nantahala National Forest just 30 minutes down the road from campus. It was a warm sunny day in June when my girlfriend and I decided to go out for a day hike with our dog. After driving out there we ate lunch and just enjoyed being in nature. On the hike back to the truck we stopped at an overlook at Salt Rock. As I was looking over the rolling granite peaks I realized that I had found my true self. I had found something that felt down to earth and something in me that felt like it came natural. I seemed very happy about where I was in that moment. At the end of the day I wasn’t even thinking about my previous stresses from work and ongoing internship hours. So, no matter how stressful life gets just remember to take some time and go outside. Your mind body and soul will thank you for it. If you are interested in finding your true self you can stop by the WCU bookstore and browse their maps of the surrounding trails and parks around Western North Carolina. You may also find these resources at the Jackson County Recreation Department and they can point you in the right direction to start your own adventure.
It was late afternoon; we had just spent most of the day backpacking on the beautiful Mountains to Sea Trail in the Linville Gorge Wilderness Area. We had no idea how far we were from camp for the night but we were exhausted and the group decided to take a break on the trail and we saw the perfect spot. I dropped my pack and bolted for the opening in the brush. I stopped as I reached the edge of the trail, my mouth dropped, and tears filled my eyes. I looked off into the Linville Gorge admire the beauty that had been nicknamed the Grand Canyon of the East. The orange-pink colors of the sky as the sun was making its break for the horizon, the heavy green of the trees, mixed with the feeling of the wind blowing my sweaty t-shirt dry and the sound of the water flowing down the Linville River softly off in the distance.

It was a moment I would never forget. Ever since I’ve become a Parks and Recreation Management (PRM) Major, I’ve had more than one of these life-changing moments seared in my mind. Whether it’s been on top of a mountain, on a lake, or on a rock face this major has changed me as a human being completely and it’s been for the better. Parks and Recreation is more than just Park Rangers and Leslie Knope, it’s much more than that, and if you haven’t already considered studying PRM, I want each and every one of you to take a look with me.

My first year and a half at WCU I studied computer science. Don’t get me wrong, I love computers and I was good with them, but I believed a lot of what society says about financial security and wanting to make the big money and I think that’s why I chose it. It wasn’t until I had a rather large change of heart that I realized that college is about so much more than financial security. It’s about finding who you are and what you’re capable of and I decided that I wasn’t going to be able to do that sitting behind my computer for 4 years, and then for the rest of my life. So I took a risk, I switched my major to Parks and Rec.

A semester and a half later, here I am. I’ve climbed to the top of our rock wall multiple times when before I never would have had the nerve to get on the rock wall at all. I’ve completed countless hikes; some as short as a mile and some of lengths over 10 miles. I successfully completed a 9-day backpacking trip, am now quite the stand up paddler, and a decent snowboarder. Although this isn’t about my accomplishments over the past semester, I want you to know that all of these things I just listed I never would have even considered a full year ago. The point is this: Life is not about the money, there is so much more to it than money. It’s about the memories you make and the people that you make those memories with. Through PRM I’ve been challenged physically, emotionally, and spiritually in ways I’ve never thought possible, but I’ve also made some great friends and some even greater memories along the way. I’ve grown as a man and overcome many fears. Now, that’s not to say that everyone who chooses Parks and Rec suddenly becomes super courageous, but it can help you find things you never knew about yourself, it just happened to be that I found courage in myself.

Whether or not you believe PRM is for you, I want to encourage you to ask yourself this question: Why am I studying what I’m studying? Is it because it’s easy? Is it because you’re guaranteed a fat paycheck? Or is it because it’s what you truly love and it’s what you find your identity in? Don’t let the world tell you what to study, decide for yourself. Take a risk.
PRM 427 Expedition—Jessie Pardue

It was my sophomore year, spring 2015 semester at Western Carolina University. Finally getting a feel for my major, I was taking some classes that I enjoyed and pertained to Parks and Recreation Management. As the semester flew by an announcement came up about a summer PRM class called PRM 427. Immediately I was interested. The class was a ten-day backpacking expedition trip from May 10th through the 20th. We would hike through Linville Gorge, Table Rock, North Carolina and finish at the peak of Mount Mitchell. It wasn’t just a hiking trip but a Wilderness Education Association (WEA) leadership program to help us learn from the teaching perspective so that we could become outdoor leaders to pursue similar tasks such as Andrew was doing for the trip. I signed up and started prepping for the class.

There was a lot to prep for, like having the right gear such as good boots, appropriate clothing, and of course working out more than usual to be in shape for the trip. Andrew Bobilya was the head instructor along with two others. Andrew made a point to really prep for the trip because he wanted everyone to be in somewhat good shape so we would hike easily together. Another thing that came with prepping was creating outlines of two lessons that were assigned to each of us. I was assigned backpack packing and the correct ways to pack a pack, and the other lesson was to demonstrate how to use the stoves for backcountry cooking. Prior to the trip we each worked on our outlines until we had them polished and ready to be taught.

I had the first lesson to start out the trip on the first day. The first day included packing up all of
our gear and getting everything ready to go for the first real day of traveling and starting the hike. Since my lesson was packing a pack I demonstrated the correct way to pack up my pack and also adjust the pack so that it was comfortable to hike with. My lesson went smoothly and after the fact everybody was packed up and ready to go.

The next morning came bright and early. After a nice last sleep in our comfy beds we were all fired up and ready to hit the trail. We finally arrived to the trail head. At the trail head we had a lot of lessons to cover before hitting the actual trail. This took nearly three hours of learning and listening and by the end of it we were all jumping out of our boots ready to hike. We didn’t do as much hiking in this course because it was focused more on teaching us how to instruct in the back country.

Each day we had a new Leader of The Day (LOD), which means that particular day being the LOD, your duty was to plan out the whole day and lead the group to whatever our adventure was. That included making sure we were getting all the lessons in and also having time to hike or cook or whatever it might be. On the second day I was given the responsibility of the LOD, partnered with another classmate. I mentioned that I wanted a challenge to Andrew and he gave us a pretty strenuous hike that came with the second day on the trail. After our day of leading, I found out that you can plan and plan as much as you want to but more than likely it will never go as planned. For example timing, we had the whole day planned and had time frames in which to do everything but almost everything was delayed or didn’t go in the time frame that we planned for. Figuring out not to stress when this happens was key, just as long as everything went well that day, and it did. Our LOD went very smoothly and I was happy with the results.

As we hiked mile after mile and learned lessons throughout each mile, our group was gaining trust and friendship. We were starting to feel comfort around one another. We were once complete strangers who turned into a group of best friends and who cared for one another and were there for each other. I loved this connection I had with everyone. This was one of my favorite parts of the whole trip. To this day, I know that each and every person on the trip I could count on to be there for me. This is something that I can write about now, but could never be explained.

During the trip we had a climbing lesson as well. When we hit Table Rock we made a base camp and would go climbing in the morning after our arrival. This was the first time I had been introduced to climbing, and especially climbing outside on a real rock. We hiked to the rock face that morning. When we arrived we had a lesson, of course, about rock climbing and how to use all of the gear that was being handed to us. After learning the basics we went off and started climbing using a delay system, which is a technique used from person to person to allow a human anchor attached to the same rope that the climber was attached to. If the climber was heavier than the belayer, then we used another person backing up the belayer called a backup belayer. We each had to belay a couple of times and there were different levels of climbing that we had an opportunity to try if we wanted. The rock was so beautiful, it looked off into the mountains and the day was just right for an amazing view. I will always remember how beautiful that day was to me. It made me want to learn how to climb more and broaden my horizons in outdoor activities. Everybody was so encouraging to everyone when they were climbing, and I think that’s also what made the experience worth while.

After a lot of learning and a lot of adventures we had together the trip was coming to an end. We were all sad because we didn’t want to leave each other after what great bonds we had made with each other. Also at the same time we were ready to have that great big meal at a restaurant waiting for us at the peak of Mount Mitchell. As we arrived to the restaurant and all ordered way too much food, we sat and talked and decided we all had to stay in touch. To this day we have all stayed in touch and some of them are even my closest friends. This trip is now a big part of me and has partially helped made me realize who I am and how to enjoy the simple things in life. If you are into outdoor leadership and would love to go on an expedition trip in the back country then this is the trip for you. If you are interested in this course you can contact Andrew Bobilya. He will be leading the trip on a mountaineering expedition in Wyoming. To learn more contact ajbobilya@email.wcu.edu.
Many spiritual and emotional moments can occur in the woods. Upon completing PRM 427 (a ten day expedition style course offered by WCU’s Parks & Recreation Management program), I came back a better and humbled person. Putting myself in challenging and difficult situations like walking in the rain, pushing my body to new physical limits, digging a hole every time I had to use the bathroom, and crying out for fresh vegetables (my mom would be so proud) surprisingly builds character. The reason why I changed so much is because I had the opportunity to go beyond my daily life to work on myself, be with new people, and have experiences that I wouldn’t otherwise have. There were many hard moments; many tears were shed out of anger, injury, and reflection on where I was in life. Backpacking can be a lot of fun, and I brought back a new outlook to my home life that has increased my overall happiness. Some of the lessons that I brought back from the trail include:

1. Accept what’s out of your control

The hardest adjustment that I had to make is that I was no longer in control of certain factors that changed group dynamics (like the weather). Although it did not rain much while we were on our trip, every time it did rain I got mad. I hate the rain, but I especially hate it when I’m trekking up the side of a super steep mountain, falling every couple of feet, and falling behind the group because the mud keeps making me slip. Not having the option of going indoors or driving away during inclement weather was hard for me to accept, but the harder I fought it the worse my attitude became. As soon as I eventually was able to accept the rain and focus on the task at hand, trail life became easier and my mind was at peace.

2. Time management

Unless you have an emergency, your personal needs are insignificant on the trail. Going on a planned trip with other people means that you can’t bail out and go watch Netflix, and you are forced to being in the moment. I had to take the little amount of personal time I had to complete homework for PRM 427 or take the risk of falling behind a day or two to get sleep. Planning enough time to get ready in the morning, cook, use the bathroom, do homework, and sleep into the already laid out schedule is difficult but doable (if you think smart and hard about your schedule). Time management requires putting important priorities ahead of smaller ones and compromising for the fact that there are only so many hours during the day.

3. You can’t get through life alone

One of the most emotional moments I had occurred on 5/18. On 5/17, I had been group leader with another group member. Being group leader that day was stressful because halfway through leading, we were left without instructors for our final expedition. Looking over our Time/Energy/Climate Control Plan (a detailed schedule that described in detail the areas we would be hiking through) for 5/18, the group was in for a very long day. We had to hike alone for 5.2 miles from a place called North Schuferd Creek to Deep Gap, gaining 2820 ft. elevation. As we began the ascent onto the mountain, I kept fallling uphill. My pack wasn’t packed correctly so it was too heavy, and the weight from the top kept knocking me over. We pulled over many times to drink water, and I would try to repack every time, but my pack still wasn’t quite right.

Fall after fall, I started losing hope of making it up the mountain. Having recently discussed hard family issues, the hurt was still fresh on my mind, so I lost hope all at once. My concentration was shot, and I finally had a rather large fall. Trying to get myself back up, I fell again. Then, I fell again, and I got so frustrated that I started bawling. A group member took the handle of my pack and yanked me up onto a rock, while another group member gave me a Snickers bar (perfect commercial opportunity), and then I got a calf and back massage until I started to feel better. We took some of the items out of my pack to make it easier to carry. We then hiked on, and we finally made it to Deep Gap. It has taken me a while to realize that not all people are bad or out to get others. The sincerity and openness of the group made it that much easier for all of us to get through the trip. The kindness displayed by my peers and trip leaders will continue to inspire me and force me to be a better person.
Almost five months later and I still miss the group and the long days we put in at Linville Gorge and Mount Mitchell. The scenery was so beautiful and the discussion was always rich (when flatulence wasn’t a focal point of conversation). Being away from my regular reality allowed me to reflect on who I wanted to become and how I wanted to deal with certain issues back at home. Since then, I am closer to my friends and working on developing a better relationship with my family. My confidence has grown since I was able to complete something most people have not had the opportunity to do, for which I am thankful. You have to put in work if you want to change, and I am thankful for every step, scrape, burn, cut, and bruise. WCU’s Parks and Recreation Management program will hold another trip May 2016. If you are looking to work on technical skills with a group of caring and competent professionals, I highly recommend going. If your technical skills are adequate, I recommend going for a piece of mind.

Florida Keys—Alex Church

It all started with a project in Debby Singleton’s High Adventure Travel class. The requirements were two days and two nights of a human powered trip. After a guest speaker came and presented his personal trip on kayaking around the Florida Keys to the class, Raynor Ward proposed mimicking the trip for our personal project. After a couple days of searching for others willing to participate, we managed to put together a group of five people to go on this adventure. The participants were Raynor, Allen Grosse, Danielle Russell, her mother Cindy Russell, and myself, all of which had little experience with long distance paddling on the ocean.

The first obstacle for me was packing. Being one of the least experienced, I had little to no equipment needed to participate on this trip. I had the clothing and that was about it. Luckily, my dad had a lot of the things I would need such as dry bags, a compact cooking system called a Jetboil, sleeping bag, and jugs for water. All that was left to get was food, utensils, reusable bowls and cups. I soon realized I over packed like most trips. Luckily, everyone and everything fit in the car and on April 1, 2015 we were on our way to the Keys.

The first day started off a little crazy due to the fact our kayak outfitter provided us with the wrong kayaks. Instead of touring kayaks we were given sit-on-top kayaks with little room for equipment. We managed to do the best with what we had and were able to fit all necessary gear onto the kayaks. We started our trek on Marathon Key and started paddling towards a Key called Pigeon Key. All was going smoothly until we began approaching Pigeon Key and our tandem kayak tipped over and began taking on water because of a stripped plug. With some group members becoming distressed, everyone tried to keep calm and push to finish our first leg of the trip. When we finally arrived to Pigeon Key, our trip took a mild downturn when locals told us that the Key is under restoration and we would not be able to stay. We were forced离开 our
kayaks and walk a walk of shame down a two mile bridge back to Marathon Key. After a heated debrief of the day, we came to the conclusion that staying in a hotel would be best since some people left their overnight gear on Pigeon Key.

Although it was nice to get showers, we were all ready to continue our adventure on day two. When we made it back to our kayaks, we packed everything up and were on our way. Paddling with the current made it a world of difference and allowed us to arrive to Molasses Key quicker than we thought. Molasses Key was made of coral which would’ve made walking barefooted uncomfortable, so we decided to check out the neighboring Key that had a beach area and plenty of trees for our Eno Hammocks. This is where we set up camp for the remainder of the trip!

Over the next two days of our trip, we spent those days collecting shells, enjoying wildlife, meeting boaters who landed on our island, and storytelling by the fire. We found a lone spider, a giant starfish, a sea turtle, sting rays, tons of hermit crabs, and saw two nurse sharks one night during high tide. Having my bed right by the sound of the ocean was so much better than any electronical sound maker, and our biggest worry was the tide coming up too high. Cooking meals was one of the easiest parts since I had a Jetboil and Mountainhouse Meals and there was plenty to go around! Mountainhouse meals are lightweight freeze dried meals that are great for backpackers and travelers. With the use of the Jetboil, our meals were ready to eat within 10 minutes after the boiled water soaks into the foods. I only burnt myself one time because I didn’t close the bag well enough when I went to shake the contents. They were surprisingly very well seasoned too. As our last day approached, we began gathering up our belongings to finish our trip against the current back to Marathon Key.

After a long trek of motivational songs and quotes, we finally made it back to Marathon. Before the trip had started, a majority of our group had been acquaintances that knew each other from classes. Through our struggles and support for each other we were all able to gain personal experience and personal achievement while working as a group to push another. If I were to do this trip over, I would pick the same location and do more research on places that are public land where we stay.

Interested in taking a class that explores the history and future of adventure tourism? PRM 434: High Adventure Travel is a great way to learn about how adventure travel and tourism has evolved as well as allowing the student to create their own trips. The class is offered Spring Semester, every other year.
Flashpacking Verses Backpacking—Raynor Ward

Flashpacking and backpacking are essentially the same ideology, where in practice, backpacking is absence of technology and flashpacking is an abundance of technology. Many backpackers today may not realize they are flashpacking, but this term has come more popular and common with the rapid rate of advancement in technology. Gear is becoming lighter, more compact, and versatile. A current push to become more of a flashpacker is that, flashpackers are able to open a door into nature for others that may have not seen or been interested in these activities. This then creates more awareness of conservation and creating a smaller impact on nature.

Businesses and entrepreneurs alike are in the market to be seen, they are using social media to advertise. Social media is the fastest growing medium for advertisements and information. Flashpackers are key in this medium, this does not mean they are always connected; they just simply fuel the spread of ethical adventure travel. This is done by always being informed and getting the best deal to reduce cost and use. A well-informed adventure traveler can travel further and possibly budget better. Flashpackers also help spread the businesses and entrepreneur’s deals to others and can inform others of the pros and cons of establishments. There is a strong empowering movement inside of flashpacking geared towards women. It is not only reducing the perception of risk of women traveling, but it is also creating savorier adventure travelers. These female flashpackers are feeling empowered. This creates a sense of pride, which provides a venue for women to discuss with each other the positive and negative aspect of their travels. More adventure travelers discover these new locations and niche travels through the free advertisements that flashpackers are providing, by sharing their travels instantly or relatively soon after.

One may argue that flashpackers create a negative impact on the environment with creating a surplus of disposable battery use. This is something that is an issue but with the advancements in solar technology and rechargeable batteries, this negative aspect of technology is reducing its footprint. The cost of this more renewable battery source is dropping so that those with a smaller budget may be more apt to adopt this practice.

The past trend has been that flashpackers are slightly older, thirty years and older, but new trends are showing that younger adults and teenagers are embracing flashpacking. This is because the cost of technology is decreasing and the younger adults are more connected to social media.

Flashpackers use technology and so do backpackers, but the line is drawn at needs. Flashlights are a form of technology but the use of them does not make one a flashpacker. Once one starts using computer-based technology to capture their travels this lines them up in the flashpacking category. Computer based logic survival tools also places one into the flashpacking group. Human based logic survival would be paper maps and a compass, compared to GPS, or a device that’s computer-powered navigation.

In conclusion flashpacking is here to stay and will grow as fast technology grows. This form of adventure travel is a growing economic force that will create many new jobs, business, and turn other less advantageous travelers on to new adventures. One can still enjoy the enlightenment of separating ones self from society and still be connected at ones own choice. This is not to say that backpacking is dying, in reality it now has a more fun and exciting friend. Flashpacking is helping spread the word that nature is here; we should respect it, enjoy it, and encourage others to get out there.

Sources:

20 The Tent Peg
NRS Water Shoes—Jennifer Browne

Recently I have become more interested in white water kayaking. I have been flat water kayaking most of my life and have only been around lakes. Now being in Cullowhee and having access to rivers I have become more interested in trying to paddle rapids. Starting to paddle in white water is a whole new ball game, and starting with different gear. I had to look into what to wear when paddling, and what shoes to have. I usually did not wear shoes when I was in my touring kayak, because I really did not need too.

In the river I want shoes for a few reasons: safety, keep warm, and protection. Now I did not do good research on shoes because I did not think they were very important. I was wrong! So I went onto LL bean’s website and just typed in Paddling shoes, found a pair with NRS name on it and thought I bet they are great (because I love all my NRS gear). Well I was wrong (again). I wore my shoes first in Cedar Cliff Lake when working with the PRM 254 class on kayaking. They were way to bulky, I could barely fit my feet into my kayak, and they let in so much water. I then wore them in Sam Fowlke’s swift water rescue class and that was terrible. Going in and out of the water made the shoes gather so much water, I was walking in a bucket basically. This class is around five to six hours long so that meant my feet were sitting in water for five hours. The gel in the bottom of the shoes started to seep out once I began walking on them full of water, lastly the shoes held the stink of the water even after washing them.

So overall these shoes are horrible and I would not recommend buying them. They are not good water shoes or paddling shoes.

Longboarding—Allen Grosse

Longboarding is a very fun activity that many students participate in on Western Carolina University’s campus. However, due to campus rules this activity is illegal. Anyone caught riding a longboard on campus by the campus police will be stopped and given a ticket. There is absolutely no good reason why longboarding should not be allowed on campus. There are many schools in North Carolina that allow longboarding on their campus. A few of those schools are North Carolina State University, Appalachian State University, and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Based on the geography of our campus here at WCU, why is this activity illegal? Western Carolina University has one of the most ideal campuses for longboarding. The few hills that we have are not steep but they are long and gradual which means that anyone who is longboarding won’t gain too much speed and can easily stop.

During my junior year of college I picked up longboarding as a way of transportation around campus. On my first ever time riding my longboard on campus I got a ticket. When I asked the officer why I was receiving a ticket he told me it was against the rules. He did not explain to me why it was against the rules. I pondered this for a while and could not come up with any reason as to why I got a ticket other than that it is a safety issue. If you compare longboarding to bicycle riding on campus they are very similar in the level of danger involved. A bicycle may have brakes but a skilled longboard rider can actually stop faster than a bicycle. A bicycle may seem more agile but a longboard is built to carve and provides a more stable riding platform. Taking that into consideration, I believe that the rules for longboarding on campus should be revised and changed in order to appeal towards the numerous recreational activities that the students at WCU participate in.
6th Annual Cullowhee Canoe Slalom - Maurice Phipps

The PRM Program and Base Camp Cullowhee hosted the 6th Annual Cullowhee Canoe Slalom on September 12th. The Center for Service Learning students assisted with the gate judging. The slalom was held on the Tuckasegee River, just upstream of the bridge and downstream of the dam in Cullowhee.

There were over 90 registrations in several different classes that included students, local residents and families. The Cullowhee Revitalization Endeavor attended the event to fundraise for the proposed river park being planned at this site. They raised $1100 through a raffle and the slalom registrations raised $200 for the PRM Club and the new PRM Scholarship fund.

The slalom is a great event for learning and honing kayaking, canoeing and SUP boarding skills. It is also an opportunity for PRM students to support the PRM Program and learn planning skills as well. Many thanks to the PRM planning committee who helped produce the world class PERT Chart and a smoothly run event. This is the only event that happens in “Old Cullowhee” so that’s another plus.

If you missed it this year, make sure you attend next year at the 7th annual event. Start training now and jump into the planning that will be starting next semester.
Fishing—Adam King

May 30, 2015 was one of those days that were in your favor. Fishing bass tournaments has always been a passion of mine and to do it at a collegiate level makes me strive to be the best I can. As a member of the WCU Bass Cats I'm not only representing myself but also my school. On this day, the FLW College Fishing program was hosting a regional qualifying tournament on Lake Hartwell, South Carolina. To qualify for the Southeastern Conference championship and you had to make the top 15 cut during this tournament. This event consisted of teams from colleges throughout the Southeastern United States. A total of 83 teams competed in this tournament. The goal was to catch the 5 heaviest bass between 7:00am and 3:00pm, and the top 15 teams will compete in the Conference Championship.

On the morning of the tournament my teammate and I were not feeling confident because of a slow practice. We had some spots in mind but weren't getting our hopes up. We were boat number 72. This means we could not take off until the other 71 boats have, this is a disadvantage because the areas that hold a greater quality of fish will more likely be taken. Once we took off we had about an 8-mile boat ride before we got to our first spot. Little did we know that we were going to run into trouble, about half way to our spot my boat broke down. The prop on my boat had spun out, meaning we were unable to move. Both of us were discouraged knowing there was nothing we could do about it. Our only hope was to use my trolling motor and troll to the bank and start fishing.

It was hard to fish at your full potential because of everything else running through your head. The day seemed over before it even started. We both just accepted the fact that we were going to have to be towed in and just started fishing in hopes for the best. By the time 1:30pm had approached my teammate and I had caught 5 bass that weighed a total of 11 pounds and 7 ounces. This was truly a miracle and we ended up in 9th place and clinched our spot in the Southeastern Conference Championship. We could not have done it without the help of another teammate because he took time out of his day to come tow us back in. This was truly my favorite catch. I highly recommend visiting Lake Hartwell, not only for fishing but this area provides many other recreating activities such as kayaking, camping and paddle boarding. Also if you are interested in fishing at a collegiate level the WCU Bass Cats would love to have new anglers who are serious about the sport.
Swim Lesson—Colt Miller

“Are you the teacher?” Something I heard quite a bit over the summer, from children who didn’t want me to say yes. For the past six years I have worked as a lifeguard for the City of Asheville. One of our main jobs is teaching free swim lessons to children. Through my six years of teaching I’ve worked with over 200 kids. In all of my classes I was the teacher, but there were many times I felt like the student. Now there is a learning curve to becoming a teacher. Instead of thinking of the class as you talk, them listening, you must instead think of it as you steering them in the right direction and then doing your best to keep up.

Each class would start the same way, corralling a large group of third graders into a pool and trying to keep them in the same relative area. We would then start whatever lesson we had planned and I would just try to survive. I knew that isn’t what parents expect the teachers to be thinking when they drop their kids off and maybe for other instructors it’s different. However, I somehow found a way to be pretty good at teaching and my students learned a lot.

As I got older I learned more and more and ended up feeling like I had a pretty good grip on what I was doing. Then I had one student that took everything I knew and completely threw it out the window. His name was Bernie and he was not my favorite. I would tell the kids to sit down and he would stand up. I would tell the class to say their names and he would say mine. He didn’t listen to anything I said and challenged me every day. I tried every teaching method I knew to get him to listen and none of them worked. Finally on the last day of the class I took them to the diving board. This was something I did for all my classes, if they wanted to jump they were able to and if not I would be in the water to catch them.

The entire class went off without a problem. Then Bernie came up, and with a look of terror on his face he screamed at me, “There ain’t no way I’m going be jumping off this board!” This confused me as I had figured Bernie would be excited and ready to do this one thing. He then began to uncontrollably sob on the pool deck. As I told the class to go back to their parents I walked over to Bernie and tried to talk to him but he wouldn’t say anything to me. Then an idea came to my mind. I ran up to our pool storage room and grabbed a life jacket. I ran back down and told Bernie if he wanted to wear it and jump he could. He stood up, wiped his tears took the life jacket and threw it into the pool. He then proceeded to run on the board and jump right in. This was a problem because throughout the class he never paid attention so he could not swim. I jumped in and drug him out. As I swam him to the side I was trying my best to control my anger. How could he be that stupid? I was so ready to just get him out of my class and not have him back. As he climbed out of the pool I knew I couldn’t yell at him in front of his mother so I was just going to be calm, cool and collected and just try to be polite.

As I climbed out of the pool after him I was met by his mother waiting for me. She apologized for what he had done and told me that he would be in big trouble at home. As she finished we both turned to Bernie. He was sitting there with the biggest smile on his face which just infuriated me more. The nerve of this little nine year old. He then looked me and said, “I did it!”

Me and his mother stood there confused as he began to explain. “I jumped off the board! I just got mad and decided that even if I sank you would come get me! Thanks a lot Mr. Colt, I can’t wait until next year!” He then ran off and his mother smiled at me, thanked me and headed off after him.

I was mad but I also had a strange sense of pride. I don’t know why because he hadn’t learned anything other than he can do something stupid and someone would save him. Then I realized that I had helped him conquer one of his fears. If I wouldn’t have gotten the life jacket he would have never gotten angry and jumped. So I walked away with a different outlook. Even though it wasn’t something I meant to teach, he still learned a new lesson.

These kids have taught me so much about life that I could never repay them. Teaching a skill whether it be kayaking, rock climbing, or even swim lessons, there is always a lesson to learn for both the teacher and the students. So, teach something you enjoy doing. Enrich someone else’s life with a new skill and you might just learn something too.
Disc Golf- Cory Lindner

The leaves are turning and all the colors are out. The mountains never look this good; we live in the land of beautiful fall landscapes. This sounds like a perfect time to visit the local golf course and get in a round of golf while seeing the landscape from a new point of view. There is one main problem with this sport especially for a college student, money. All aspects of golf are expensive. It costs money for clubs, a good set runs anywhere from two hundred to a few thousand dollars, a bag, which cost fifty to a few hundred dollars, and lastly green fees and cart fees at the course. Typically, the fees for playing 18 holes run approximately from thirty to one hundred and fifty dollars. It is no secret that this sport is expensive and it’s easy to see why it would be hard for a college student to participate in this sport regularly.

This brings me to my point about disc golf, which is modeled almost exactly after ball golf. These sports have a very similar rules, etiquette, and course design. The only major differences are the yardage of holes and instead of hitting a ball into a hole you throw a disc into a basket. For a lot of people one issue or turnoff to disc golf is some of the stereotypes, which includes alcohol. Some people may have the conception that disc golf is just a time to hang out outside and drink a few beers. I am not going to go into details of concern about what people do in their own free time. I will only tell my experiences with the sport. I just started playing disc golf about three months ago. It began when I wanted to play real golf with a buddy and he suggested we play disc golf. I was skeptical as if I would fit in to this community and was not sure what to think.

Even though I was hesitant I began playing disc golf and found that I really enjoyed it and it even better provided a good challenge. All my experiences have been great. There of course are some people that meet the typical stereotypes and there are indeed some people that go out to play disc golf just to drink and play or do drugs and play golf. This is one aspect I was unsure of before I started playing. In all the rounds that I have played I have been surprised to see people that meet this stereotype a few times. Almost every round that I have played I can say that I have met some really cool people that are super laid back and very accepting. It is not uncommon to go play a round of disc golf and run into a group of guys you just start talking to and end up playing the rest of the round with them. Disc golf is a really challenging sport that has a very supporting community around western North Carolina. I found that in this community most people are friendly and helpful. If this was a worry, you can rest assured knowing that more times than not you will fit in great and possibly make some friends while playing.

Better than the community, one of the best selling points for this sport is that all of the courses around western North Carolina are free to play. The only requirement for the sport is to show up and bring your discs. This makes disc golf a great opportunity and substitute for ball golf, especially for students. If you would like more
information about course all over the nation you can visit www.pdga.com to search courses and information about them. Within an hour drive of Cullowhee, NC there are a number of courses available. Western Carolina has a 13-hole disc golf course on its campus, the course starts directly behind Reid building. Jackson county parks and recreation has a very beginner friendly course that is 18 holes located at the rec centers complex just a couple of miles up from Western Carolina University. The town of Waynesville offers two courses one at the Waynesville recreation center and the other at Haywood community college these are about 30 minutes from Western Carolina. Just an hour away there are multiple courses in Asheville which consist of Richmond Hill which likely Asheville’s best course. There are a couple of others within an hour and a half that include Sand Hill, Lake Julian, Mars Hill University, Black Mountain, and Fontana Village. All these courses are available to see on www.pdga.com as well as http://www.dgcoursereview.com. Also, for those who didn’t know, there is a disc golf club at Western Carolina University that competes with other schools. You can find more information about the club team on Western Carolinas sport club page.

Land Down Under—Erin Baker

June 28th, 2010. The Blue Mountains of Australia.

I had been in Australia for nine days now with People to People Student Ambassadors. I’ve lost all of my luggage, seen and toured the Sydney Opera House, went to a farmer’s market, bought opals, toured and had a dinner and cruise on the Walsh Bay in front of the Sydney Opera House, found my luggage, almost got ran over by a car, and now, I’m here, in the Blue Mountains of Australia, getting ready to do my first ever rappel down a rock face. I am terrified of heights, the Full-On employees get me in my harness, once I’m strapped in; I am paralyzed.

A little background on how I got to be here; my eighth grade teacher introduced me to People to People while I was in her class. She told me she was a chaperone for this program and she chose me as one of the students to be in the application and interview process. Once I was interviewed along with 150 other students my age, and selected to go to Australia, we had monthly meetings to keep us on track with what was needed to be done in order to leave in June.

It’s my turn to rappel. I get to the edge, they’re tying me in, and I start bawling my eyes out. I’m shak-ing, and scared. The instructor says, “Don’t worry, it’s only 200 feet! You’ve got this! You’ll be on the ground before you know it! We won’t let anything happen to you. Now just, lean back, and put your brake on, we’re going to take a picture for you to remember this.” The only thought that ran through my mind was, “I will NEVER forget this. I will NEVER forgive y’all for having me do this. I will NEVER do this again.”

Now, everyone that was in my Land Based class last semester can attest to this change in comfort around heights, I’m not afraid of heights, I’m not afraid of rappelling. What happened to me that day helped me grow confidence in people, it was seeing a gorgeous view, and becoming more and more in love with the outdoors. There are beautiful places all over the world to explore! I encourage everyone to get out there, and stretch yourself!
More Than Just Park Service - Kailanne Burleson

"You want to be a Park Ranger?" "What do you do in class, climb trees all day?" "Oh, that’s an easy major." These are the responses I get when I tell people my major is Parks and Recreation Management. There is nothing wrong with being a park ranger or climbing trees, but no that is not why I chose to major in Parks and Recreation. What people don’t know about the major is that there are 5 different focus areas to choose from.

My particular focus is Community Recreation. With this my classes are focused more around sports. I want to be able to work for a community’s county or city recreation center. I want to be able to plan sporting events for the public as well as other celebrations and community events. With this focus I get to take courses in health and physical education sport management business, and even recreational therapy. I want to be really involved in sports and I want people to associate my major to still be connected with the sports industry. Most people don’t realize the management positions that have to be filled to organize all the activities that go on, from Little League to retirement community activities.

When I hear the comment of Parks and Recreation being an easy major, I just think, why would it be a major at a college level if there wasn’t some type of importance? The professors have high expectations of each of us within the major. They get to know us on a personal level and challenge our abilities to help us come out of the major well prepared to succeed in our careers. Some aspects of the major are exciting and fun, but what our professors show us is how to plan events so that they turn out as intended. Without all the hard work behind the scenes, none of the excitement and fun would take place.

It is really a pet peeve of mine that people assume that my major is only classified as outdoor recreation and being in nature, or categorizing it as an easy major. The other focus areas that Parks and Recreation Management majors can choose from are Commercial and Resort Recreation, Outdoor Leadership and Instruction, Community Health and Wellness, and Recreation Resource Management. If other students here at Western knew all the possibilities within the Parks and Recreation Management Major I think there would be way more people choosing to pursue this major.
Following in the Footsteps—Jordan Davis

In our lifetime we seek that adventure that not only defines who we are but also shapes our years to come in such a fashion that we are intrinsically driven to deepen our search into our true being. Each individual journey of self-discovery is different, so different that they are indefinable in all aspects except for the fact that one will come to fruition. Once an individual’s journey starts, it does not end, for the pursuit of self-advancement and knowledge never truly ceases to stop once the fire has been lit. During my time in the PRM program I believed that I was on the path of my journey, since the months away I have realized that I am merely at the trailhead.

I graduated from PRM at WCU in spring 2015 and moved to Mankato, Minnesota in August to start the Experiential Education Master’s Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato. The program was created in 1972, the first of it’s kind in the United States, and to this day holds the title of most prestigious Experiential Education program. At WCU I focused in Outdoor Leadership and Instruction, I had the goal of becoming an adventure educator who would use experiential education and expeditionary learning to teach my students. I came into the program believing that experiential education and outdoor education were the same; I came to the realization that outdoor education is simply a sub-category of the experiential education teaching model.

Several weeks into the semester of my Educational Reform class my fellow classmates and I were struggling to define what experiential education was. Our goal was to develop a comprehensive definition that could be used to accurately convey what the teaching model was. It was comprised of elements such as pertinent theory that paralleled an educative experience, a higher level of student engagement and individualism and an incorporation of emotional and intellectual fortitude. When we asked ourselves “what does this look like?” many answered that its taking a class hiking or going to a museum or something equivalent. When we evaluated our responses we found that our definitions were a combination of outdoor and place-based education, another sub-category of experiential education. Towards the end of the three-hour discussion we devised many solutions to what experiential education looks like; we said it was project based-learning (student driven and designed projects that are evaluated based on a holistic and quasi-individual rubric), student charged discussions set at understanding key concepts within a problem, activities set to challenge and grow student and educator devised personal and academic goals and above all, the student has just as much a voice in the their education as their parents and/or educators.

In this program, compared to many other graduate and undergraduate programs, we have not covered much material, in total we may have read around twelve books. Through statistical data the world has found that experiential and project-based learning not only better prepares students for college and post college but fosters a new mentality, a mindset that loves learning and the pursuit of knowledge. Compared to traditional education experiential learning covers less material in a longer time and often takes more time and effort to create. When compared to traditionally taught students experiential students scored 40%-85% higher on standardized and college placement tests.

I was asked to write this article regarding my time after graduation and how the program was going and what sort of things I was learning. I typically have one night class Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday night for a couple hours, I am taking Education Reform, Philosophy of Experiential Education and Research Methods, I have assigned readings, video presentations, seminar discussions, research papers, lesson plans and curriculums. Sound familiar? The grading is quite complex though, here is how it’s broken down; 50% of my grade is participation and an additional 50% are my projects. How does this benefit anyone? In the real world you can’t build a lesson plan and not explain it, you can’t develop a program and not argue in favor of it; half of the professional world relies on your work while the other half needs you to be there and operate it. When I say “I look forward to class” that does not simply begin to cover how I feel, I’m witnessing not only myself but my friends develop professional mindsets and come to realizations that will shape our years to come, I am engaged, challenged and growing in ways I never imagined, not only am I following in the footsteps of my favorite educators but I am discovering that I am becoming more and more like them. I find myself inside and outside of class saying, “I want to know more”, a phrase I was told by Maurice Phipps that is now becoming my intrinsic motivation. I’m allowing myself to not teach my friends.
and students but learn with them, a sense of humility that Ben Tholkes taught me. I laugh, cry and rejoice with my students, I incorporate not only my emotions but foster an environment in which others are comfortable to express themselves, Andrew Bobilya showed me that there is such a thing as an emotional professional. I find that I am able to find ways not only in my personal life but in my professional world to engage almost every student in almost any topic, Debby Singleton taught me that student engagement, above all else, will always provide a more fun, growing and expanding learning environment.

At this stage in the program I discovered a passion that I never even thought I would consider. I will always want to be an outdoor educator but I find that with each passing day I strive to reform primary and secondary education. From all of my experiences and lessons in high school almost none of them I can remember or have used in my college and professional years. If we are able to change how students and educators teach and learn in middle and high school we can create a future of innovators, leaders and educators. I highly recommend this program for any student who wants to become a better educator, a holistic professional and one who never
Summer Internship—AC Smoker

Over the course of this past summer, I had the opportunity to experience one of the most memorable experiences of my life. This past summer I spent my time working with a rafting company on the Nantahala River called Adventurous Fast Rivers Rafting Company. While working with Fast Rivers, I had the chance to experience many things that I had never participated in before. Over the course of these experiences I also learned a lot about myself because although it may sound like an easy-going job there is a lot more work to it than appears. Although it was tough I found that in the midst of hard work is when someone finds out what they are really made of. There were many times where I found myself tired from the multiple continuous days of work because we were a top notch rafting company on the Nantahala but I found that if I persevere though the hard work and just do the best that I can, there is always a greener pasture on the other side. What I mean by this is that when you work hard you get rewarded greatly. I not only gained positive feedback from my peers and bosses but I also gained a sense of accomplishment in which I feel was most beneficial for me. There is nothing more refreshing than accomplishing your daily task and knowing at the end of the day that you gave it your all and completed the day. If there was any advice that I could give to anyone it would be, no matter how rough your day or days have been if you keep the end in mind and keep working as hard as you can then you can achieve anything and get the sense of accomplishment you need.

Fort Fisher—Brandon Davis

What is your dream job? A job you could love and have a desire to go to everyday? To me that job is being a Park Ranger, specifically for North Carolina State Parks. A short history about my career choice is: I was in Boy Scouts when I turned 11 years old and my scoutmaster at the time was the Superintendent for Eno River State Park in Durham, NC. I asked questions about what he did and I fell in love with the job and I have just followed my career choice ever since. Over the years I’ve had a chance to work at a few really nice parks, which has, give me a good look at what to expect if I become a Ranger. This past summer I got a job as a General Utility Worker (fancy title for janitor) at Fort Fisher State Recreation Area, which is one of 2 state parks in NC that are beachfront parks. My job duties required me to remove trash from trash cans, set up umbrellas at the picnic area, clean grills, clean restrooms, minor landscaping, patrol the beach, assist visitors, and assist rangers. Fort Fisher is the only state park in NC that allows four wheel drive vehicles to drive on 4 miles of beach set aside for this purpose.

Looking at my job responsibilities one might think that it sounds like a really gross and smelly job, and they’d be right. But it was only gross and smelly for about 20-30 minutes of the day and the rest of it was spent helping out the permanent staff with maintenance projects or natural resources research. I was able to assist in “turtle runs” which involved getting to the park before it opens to the public and patrolling the beach looking for sea turtle nests laid overnight. I assisted the environmental studies interns with the colonial shore bird research program, which involved collecting data about how the predator suppression program has increased shore bird nesting at Fort Fisher and basically to determine the programs success. This experience was very important to have for my career in the future but it was more interesting to see how their habitat on the beach impacted different parts of the environment in a very positive way. All of this was very exciting to be apart of and very helpful to my knowledge of North Carolina coastal wildlife.

I had the chance to build friendships with the rangers at Fort Fisher. There are two lower level Rangers, one advanced Ranger, and the Park Superintendent so there is a very small staff to work with but I feel that one has a closer relationship and camaraderie that way. I learned a lot from these four individuals this summer and it all made me more excited to become a Ranger myself. In addition to the Rangers, I became good friends with the Maintenance Mechanics and the Office Assistant. I had to work a lot with each one of these staff members on a one on one basis, which I felt was very beneficial to developing skills that I can apply to my career in the future.

Why should one consider working here or any
other state park in North Carolina for an internship. The agency offers a multitude of different experience that would be helpful to anyone in the field of Parks and Recreation. In the state parks there are so many different things one can experience everyday and no two days are the same, which is common in this field of work and it would be beneficial to anyone in the major to try and get a job at either a state park or a national park. Working in these areas will give a student great learning opportunities, working experience, and networking for their future career. Working at this park was one of the best experiences I’ve ever had and I cannot wait to possibly work there next year.

If anyone is interested in learning more about internships with North Carolina State Parks or any other general information about the agency, please go to neparks.gov and contact the specific park you are interested in. The staff will be willing to listen to your interest and may be able to give you certain opportunities!

PRM Students Recognized for Academic Excellence

-Debby Singleton

Each semester, Dr. David Belcher, WCU’s Chancellor, recognizes students who have earned a 3.8 GPA during the previous semester at WCU. On September 30, 2015, sixteen PRM majors and one PRM minor were recognized at a ceremony. This celebration of academic achievement is WCU’s way of recognizing and commemorating student success and academic excellence. These PRM students have earned a significant honor and are role models that have demonstrated their commitment to academic and personal excellence. We are very proud of these students!

PRM Majors:
Mackenzie Boone, Katie Burke, Kimberly Colozzi (graduated August 2015)
Matthew Drauszewski, Thomas Graham, Allen Grosse
Tayler Hasbrouck, Caitlin Hines (studying at GMIT-Ireland this year)
Jennifer Jackson, Spencer Johnson, Savanna Koon (studying at GMIT-Ireland this year)
Krista Laplante, Jason Opliger, Mitch Parris
Jennifer Stogner-Lee (graduated May 2015), Amber Williamson

PRM Minor:
Marley Brooks
A number of years ago I was attending the College of Education and Allied Professions (CEAP) annual award ceremony and I saw a number of CEAP students receive scholarship awards. It made me wonder why Parks and Recreation Management students did not have a scholarship available to them. Dr. Maurice Phipps was about to go on phased retirement and I thought this would be a good time to investigate a PRM endowed scholarship linked with Maurice’s retirement. Maurice, Debby and I talked about the idea and met with the WCU Foundation Department and decided we would like to set up an endowed scholarship for PRM students. The way an endowed scholarship works is that we can’t begin awarding scholarship money to PRM students until we have $10,000 in the endowed scholarship fund. Where does the $10,000 come from? Maurice, Debby, Andrew and I began the fund raising by donating to the initial fund, but the bulk of the money comes from our PRM students and alumni. Early in the process, we discussed the fact that our students and alumni are not the big money donors that other programs may have, but we hoped that everyone would give what they could afford. Our goal is to raise $2000 a year for 5 years and at the end of the five year period we can begin awarding scholarships to PRM students. If we can reach our $10,000 goal sooner, we can begin awarding scholarships sooner. It all depends on the generosity of our students (maybe their parents) and our alumni. If you would like to donate to the scholarship, you can contact the WCU Foundation or from the WCU home page type in WCU Giving (look for the button Make Your Gift Now). The PRM scholarship is called the Phipps, Tholkes, Singleton Endowed Scholarship Fund and with your donations, we can begin joining the other scholarship funds in our college offering scholarship money to deserving PRM students.

www.givepts.wcu.edu
How The World Impacts My Life - Hana Miller

The outdoors is a place to express yourself in activities that challenges you mentally, physically, and emotionally. It opens our eyes to a whole new place with fantastic features. There are not many people that would want to spend time outside, exploring the world around them. In today’s society, people rather spend time playing with technology than being outside. But, what is not understood is that before technology, the outdoors was the only form of entertainment that people used.

Growing up with a father who is an outdoors enthusiast, I have been given the experience to being outside of the homestead. My weekends consisted of paddling down the Eno River to just a hike around William Umstead State Park in Raleigh, North Carolina. It was a way that my father and I bonded together. He would teach me all about the outdoors, whether it would be what to pack on a hike to the type of clothing should be worn on any outdoor recreation activity.

As I got older, my love for being outdoors became stronger. I would continue on more outdoor adventures with my father on paddles down many of the North Carolina rivers/lakes. But, the day finally came where our hikes and paddle trips would be limited. I was off to college and getting ready to fall into the unknown.

When first starting college, I noticed Western gave opportunities for students to do outdoor recreational activities. Seeing these opportunities made me happy, but sad because I would not doing them with my father.

After thinking long and hard, I realized that college is about making new experiences. I was in a new place, which offered so many opportunities to explore the outdoors. College was a place to make memories that could last a lifetime. With this in mind, I took on the Whitewater Trip provided by Western. I went with my best friend, Josh. After taking this leap, I felt really happy. It opened my eyes to Western North Carolina. From there, I was determined to get to explore more of my surroundings. Whenever a hike, tubing, or rafting trip was brought to my attention, I took it on. I knew my father would have wanted me to make new outdoor experiences in college. But, in the end, my number one outdoors partner was my dad. He inspired me to go outside and learn more about my surroundings.

Every day is a new adventure, as my step-mom would always tell me; take advantage of the day you are given. If you are given the chance, go do something you would have never dreamed to do, whether it might be learning to Stand-Up Paddle Board to rock climbing. Being in the outdoors doesn’t mean you have to live on the edge. You could go for a walk on your local greenway or visit a local park. But, set aside time each time for you and the outdoors. It is a getaway from civilization and broadens your mind to the outside world.

Being in the outdoors has exposed me to the best times of my life. I’ve learned many skills that have challenged me physically, mentally, and emotionally. Whenever you want to experience a new adventure or just get away from the world, go outdoors and explore. You may never know what is out there until you are there. Like John Muir once said, “In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks.”
A Christmas Eve Tradition - Tommy Connell

In my younger years, I was the athletic child in my family. My brother was considered to be the child who got the smarts in the family. I took being the athletic child to my full advantage. I was always doing sports such as basketball, football, baseball, soccer, pretty much any sport. You name it, there is a good chance I have attempted it. I wanted to do all the popular sports because I thought it was the cool thing to do. Basketball was and still is my favorite sport whether I am playing or watching, I love it.

As I matured I became more involved in other activities such as Boy Scouts. My parents kind of forced me into it and I did not want many people knowing I was in Boy Scouts because I thought it was lame and people would make fun of me. So I convinced my parents to let me quit scouts and focus on sports. Looking back now I totally regret that decision. Anyway, I quit scouts and focused on sports and somehow managed to pick up the sport of running. That would be cross-country and track and field, which also lead me to quitting basketball, baseball, and football.

At this point all my athletics focused on strictly running. In high school I did cross country, indoor track and outdoor track. For anyone who knows the sport of running there are various ways to stay in shape. A runner has days where they run really easy or some days they run really fast and hard. Some days where you run long, such as 13 plus mile runs. I am currently on the WCU Cross Country and Track & Field teams and I run 6 days a week. Whether I am at school or at home, I am always training to stay in tip top shape to run to the best of my ability.

With Christmas break quickly approaching there is a traditional run I do with my former high school coach, who also ran for WCU back in the 90’s, named Bill Baldwin, which I am looking forward too. He is from the same place I am, Brevard, North Carolina that has an abundance of trails to run on.

For the last 5 years, my coach and I have done a run in the Pisgah National Forest on Christmas Eve that is right at 17 miles. We meet up at the State Fish Hatchery located right near the infamous Looking Glass Rock. The whole run we do is a loop, we start from the fish hatchery and run out on the road for a bit and get on a trail that runs right a long the Davidson River. Then we make our way on a very popular loop called Daniels Ridge Loop which offers a an opportunity for someone to see two really cool waterfalls, Daniels Ridge Falls and Tom Spring Branch falls. Then we come out in an area called Cove Creek, which has a couple of big fields for big groups to have retreats or events there and then we make our way back to the fish hatchery where we started. Around the area is John Rock, a really cool hike that displays a view of mountain ranges and Looking Glass Rock. The Blue Ridge Parkway is only about a twenty-minute drive from this location.

We have experienced some of the craziest weather while doing this run from snow to freezing rain. The run offers some incredible opportunities for us to see such as frozen over waterfalls, we have encountered a bear before, and the views that
you get to see while running up to the top of the mountain are amazing. My way of recreating outdoors is totally different than others, even if it is in the 20-degree weather on Christmas Eve to run 17 miles. Many people call me insane and crazy for running but I just use it was motivation to improve myself. The place that I run is only about an hour and fifteen-minute drive from WCU and there are various ways of getting there. One can go the interstate towards Asheville or go up 107 into Cashiers and take highway 64 towards Brevard or you can through Waynesville on highway 276.

Courses: Summer 2016

PRM 310: SUP

When: May 16-20, 2016
Where/What: Stand Up Paddleboarding in WNC
Cost: $756.84
Credits: 3
Contact Debby Singleton for more information at singleton@wcu.edu, (828) 227-3971, or drop by Reid 122-J.

PRM 352: Beginning/Intermediate Kayaking

When: May 9-14, 2016. A required overnight trip Thursday, May 13th - Friday, May 14th ending by 6pm on the 14th.
Where/What: Kayaking in the pool, local lakes and rivers.
Requirements: Strong swimming ability
Cost: $1,035.66
Credits: 3
Only 10 spots available! Register ASAP!
Contact Andrew Bobilya at (828) 227-3326, ajbobilya@wcu.edu, or drop by Reid 122-D.

PRM 427: Wilderness Education

When: May 31-June 14, 2016
Requirements: Complete PRM 427 application packet, schedule a meeting with Dr. Andrew Bobilya for course expectations and questions.
Cost: $3,140.66 includes local transportation, food, permits, group equipment, instructor fees, WEA certification fee + one year membership and WCU tuition.
Credits: 6
Contact Andrew Bobilya at (828) 227-3326, ajbobilya@wcu.edu, or drop by Reid 122-D.

Hights - Spencer Johnson

Have you ever thought about how amazingly easy our lives are? Think about it! For the vast majority of us, we have a life that most people around the world can only dream of, that one day they might have such a luxury as to go to a college university to gain an education. Yet we groan at the thought of leaving our “Netflix” account in order to work for an education in a field that is recreation based. As a Parks and Recreation Management student of Western Carolina University, I have had such a rich experience working in, learning about, and sharing the amazing variety of outdoor opportunities that we have here in Western North Carolina.

During the fall semester of the 2015 school
year, I have had the remarkable opportunity to share what I have learned about the outdoors and recreation with a group of at-risk-youth. The group of participants that I have been programming this event for are adolescents ranging from middle school to high school aged students. While I have not yet gotten to actually run the program, with my programming partners, or spend any time with the participants that we will be working with, the thought of possibly providing a means for these kids to spend their time by recreating in the outdoors makes all of this programming worthwhile. My overall goal of this project is not to pass the class or “get this over with”, rather it is to create a positive relationship with these kids and show them that there are people who truly care about them and where they end up in life. The executive director of the H.I.G.H.T.S. program, whom we are working alongside during our program, told me that if we can redirect their path just slightly, then it will lead them to an entirely new destination in life.

So, referring back to my previous question, have you ever stopped to think about how amazingly easy our lives are? Have you ever thought about how “good of a hand we have been dealt,” even on our worst days? If you haven’t, then you should because it is far too easy to overlook the fact that someone else doesn’t “have that same hand that you’ve been dealt”. We have the opportunity to make such a great impact on this community that we are in, and that opportunity is far too uplifting to miss. So, don’t miss it.

Guiding Compass—Dominic Cosenza

It is not everyday that one finds themselves in a position to make an immediate difference in their community. More often than not we tend to overlook the impact we could have on those around us without even realizing as we go about making sure our own lives are in order. But there are those of us that are not as fortunate to have the worries that we do, and it is this aspect of community that should be receiving attention from the more fortunate.

This is precisely the opportunity the Jackson County HIGHTS program creates. The HIGHTS program is a volunteer based program that works with at-risk youth. Via its Compass program designed with these individuals in mind, it offers activities for these youth in the community to partake in outdoor activities that offer a chance to cultivate traits that are more conducive to their success in society and in life.

I was introduced to the Compass program through a programming project that I had to create for a Parks and Recreation Management class at Western Carolina University. Myself and two other group members, Spencer Johnson and Jessie Pardue are working with Marcus Metcalf, HIGHTS program director to create a canoe trip and waterfall hike on Bear Lake for the Compass program. This trip will allow participants to gain or expand on social skills while experiencing the outdoors and learning how to take care of their environment with lessons on Leave No Trace.

We hope that by providing these youth with experiences such as the canoe trip that we will not only be a healthy influence and impact in their lives but that the skills they learn while participating will help them to enrich their own lives. By providing activities it gives youth opportunities to stay out of trouble and be productive and proactive in their community. This is of great benefit to a community in that it has the potential to make an impact on someone’s life that may in turn do the same for the next generation.

The HIGHTS program will gladly accept help and volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering or a college student interested in doing an internship with the HIGHTS program please contact Marcus Metcalf at (828) 507-7231 or email him at mmetcalf@jcpsmail.org.