Evaluating the Effectiveness of Outdoor Programs’ Instructor Development Program
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Abstract
A survey was administered to students at Appalachian State University who currently participate in the Instructor Development Program. The survey analyzed participant expectations, satisfaction with the program and if the program was effectively training instructors. Retention within the program relies on participants completing a multi-class process. Participants referenced that programs offered by Outdoor Programs matched up to their expectations. The study also concluded that participants were overall satisfied with their experience throughout the different training levels. Participants indicated that they felt supported by leaders and other staff. Overall, the IDP students indicated that they want to continue to pursue their outdoor education skills with Outdoor Programs’ Instructor Development Program.

Introduction
The problem the study focuses on is that there is no current method of evaluation for the Instructor Development Program, part of the Appalachian State’s Outdoor Programs. There is no structure to evaluate participant’s satisfaction, participant’s expectations or participant’s involvement. Without evaluation, the program allows itself little growth and is unaware of participant’s thoughts and feelings towards the program. The program involves a number of steps before completion. Currently the program is unaware of at what point they are losing students and for what reasons. The program wishes to gain more information about the population that it serves.

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of the Instructor Development Program run by Appalachian State University’s Outdoor Programs. This study will help gather information on the participants in the IDP program. The study focuses on evaluating participant’s expectations, participant’s satisfaction and participant’s involvement. The study
Instructor Development Program Evaluation

surveys college students from Appalachian State University that have some professional involvement with Outdoor Programs. The students surveyed were interested in improving technical skills and learning more about Outdoor Experiential Education. Enrollment in the Instructor Development Program is voluntary. This study will inform the program on the demographics of participants involved.

This study focused on three main objectives. First, to determine if the IDP program advances professional development and leads to the student working for Outdoor Programs. Second, if the IDP program advances personal development, resulting in a growth in leadership skills, interpersonal skills and interpersonal skills. Third, too determine if the IDP program meets student’s expectations and allows them to gain the experience that they want.

**Literature Review**

This review takes an in depth look at college outdoor programs, their participants, and the benefits provided. Schwartz and Robertson-Corkery (2011) discussed the underrepresentation of women and people of color in college outdoor programs, and come up with a number of reasons in their findings explaining the lack participation from these groups. One survey referenced suggested that 80% of outdoor recreation participants were white, and 57% were male (Outdoor Recreation Participant Report, 2009). Women participants emphasize the aesthetic and social aspects of outdoor recreation, and are put off by the macho attitude of reaching a specific mountain peak or hiking a certain amount of miles.

Being exposed to the great outdoors during college outdoor programs can help build a sense of community amongst the group members (Breunig et al, 2010). These trips place the participants in a position to meet new people, share experiences with one another, while a common goal is established for the trip. Students reference the challenges of being outdoors, bad
weather, challenging terrain, as the factors that enhance the sense of community within the group.

Outdoor programs allow students to have experiences in a setting they’re less familiar with (Gregg, 2009). In the backcountry, students face unexpected challenges that help them grow as individuals. Improving social skills, and working in a group can be transferred back to the classroom.

Wolfe and Kay (2011) explore the work college outdoor programs do with incoming college freshman. Outdoor orientation programs help with the transition process from living at home to life at college, and get students involved with their new university early on. The results showed students commitment to their new university and new friends. Students also mentioned “Consequences Rather Than Lectures,” (Wolfe, Kay, 2011, p. 25) dealing with real life scenarios rather than classroom theory. Austin, et al (2008) explored more than 200 of campus outdoor programs in the United States, and highlighted multiple benefits of these programs, including more friends on campus, and more people participants would trust with an emotional secret. Vlamis, et all (2011) discuss specific gains in self growth and social skills, including independence, tolerance, and improved ability to have mature relationships with the opposite sex.

Ward, and Hobbs (2005) discuss the wide array of emotions participants could go through on a trip offered by an outdoor program. Ward and Hobbs focus on fear, and the importance of overcoming ones fears. Ward and Hobbs (2005) found that an individual’s concept of fear does changes over the duration of an outdoor adventure course. They also claim that an individual’s gender affects their approach to confronting their fears. Lastly with experience and comfort, an individual’s overall level of fear decreases on backcountry trips.
Instructor Development Program Evaluation

Overall, the information review sheds a positive light on the work done by college outdoor programs, and the population they serve. The individuals they work with come away with a growth in interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.

**Evaluation Design**

The Instructor Development Program at Appalachian State is an Outdoor Programs program that trains students to become instructors for trips. It consists of 4 different skill levels; Foundations, Essentials, Apprentices and Instructors. This evaluation project was conducted during fall of 2013. Quantitative design was used for this study. The population consisted of anyone involved in the Instructor Development Program. The convenience sampling technique was used for this study. The sample was presented by students in the foundations, essentials, apprentice, and instructor classes. The students ranged in age from 18 years old to 23 years old. With a sample size of about 40 participants, half were male and half were female. Most participants were still in the essentials level of the program.

The survey was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data for this project. The surveys were distributed via emails sent to everyone involved in the Instructor Development Program during the 2013 Fall semester. The survey was focused on student’s experiences with the Instructor Development Program, student satisfaction with the program, and student expectations of the program.

We used a twenty-one question survey of mixed questions to collect data on our sample. Both quantitative and qualitative questions were included in the questionnaire, differing in format. The survey looked at instructor and apprentice relationships as well as students’ growth throughout the program. The survey also looked at who is participating in the IDP and what they are hoping to learn from the program. Among other questions, students were asked; “Where are
Instructor Development Program Evaluation

you in the IDP process,” “Out of the outdoor activities offered by OP, what are you most interested in,” “The skills I learn in the IDP program help me in my everyday life,” and “As an apprentice, I had adequate opportunities to develop professionally.”

For the best results, we included open-ended questions that allowed participants to express their feelings towards the program. This produced answers that were helpful in creating ideas on how to change the program. Close-ended questions and self-assessment questions were also included. Self-assessment questions asked students to evaluate their specific experience with the Instructor Development Program.

The survey was administered to students by electronic mail. The survey was sent out on a Wednesday. An email included information on the purpose of the study and the appreciation of participation was sent with a link to the survey. The participants completed the whole survey and then we used SurveyMonkey to analyze our results. Our supervisor expressed the importance of the survey to each student as well as answered any of their questions, allowing the students answers to be more genuine, reliable and valid.

Some problems that could be associated with data collection are students not taking the time to fill out the surveys, surveys not being filled out truthfully and students not returning the survey in a timely manner. Moreover, the results can be generalized only within the Instructor Development Program and Outdoor Programs. This information would not be applicable to other facets of university recreation.
Instructor Development Program Evaluation

Findings
After evaluating the Instructor Development Program through Appalachian State Outdoor Programs, the opinion of students enrolled in the program was brought to light. The study’s results showed that participants were overall satisfied with their experience throughout the different training levels. Participants indicated that they felt supported by leaders and other staff. Overall, the IDP students expressed that they want to continue to develop their outdoor education skills with Outdoor Programs’ Instructor Development Program.

The reason why students enrolled in the Instructor Development Program, and what they were looking to learn from the program is illustrated very clearly through the survey results. Question #3 (Table Q3) shows that 94.29% of participants surveyed cited “have fun” as the reason they enrolled in the IDP, followed by “develop technical skills,” and an interest in working with Outdoor Programs. More specifically Table Q4 tells us the specific skills enrolled students were looking to gain, such as backpacking, climbing, and whitewater kayaking. 45.71% of students “strongly agreed” Table Q8 that the skills they acquired working with the IDP help them in everyday life.

How IDP students felt about their relationship with trip leaders/staff was another question answered through the evaluation. Questions were presented not only by asking students how they felt they were received as new students in the Instructor Development Program, but also what kind of opportunities they felt they were given as introductory level students and beyond in the program. Table Q6 shows that 40% of students agreed Outdoor Programs was welcoming at the beginning of the IDP process, and 57.14% strongly agreed. Student response showed that IDP participants didn’t believe they were receiving enough opportunities to help lead trips. When asked “As an apprentice, I received adequate opportunities to lead trips,” 57.14% responded “neutral,” and 21.43% disagreed (Table Q9). Nonetheless, 28.57% thought they were given
Instructor Development Program Evaluation

adequate opportunity to develop professionally, while 42.86% were neutral (Table Q10). Regarding IDP students relationships with Outdoor Programs trip leaders, IDP students recognized these more experienced students as mentors (Table Q11). Students trained as instructors felt confident that the IDP gave them the tools to teach introductory level students the skills needed to advance in the program (Table Q13).

After completing the introductory “foundations” part of the Instructor Development Program, students wanted to continue on with the additional classes and opportunities offered by the IDP. Table Q14 shows the level of commitment students have to the IDP, with 75% of students replying they “agree” or “strongly agree” they will pursue work with Outdoor Programs after the Instructor Development Program. 93.94% of students surveyed from the foundations class said the program increased their interest in the IDP (Table Q15)
Instructor Development Program Evaluation

Tables

Q1 What time constraints do you have during the school year? (Check all that apply)

Answered: 36  Skipped: 0

- Class: 100.00%
- Clubs: 52.78%
- Work: 58.33%
- Volunteer service: 50.00%
- Intramural/Club sports: 33.33%
- Other: 16.67%

Q3 Why did you choose to participate in the IDP? (Check all that apply)

Answered: 36  Skipped: 0

- Resume builder: 61.11%
- Social outlet: 61.11%
- Develop technical skills: 91.67%
- Develop leadership skills: 88.89%
- Have fun: 91.67%
- Work with Outdoor Programs: 91.67%
Q4 Out of the outdoor activities offered by OP, what are you most interested in?

Answered: 36  Skipped: 0

- Fly fishing: 36.11%
- Day hikes: 38.89%
- Outdoor cooking: 41.67%
- Wilderness medicine: 41.67%
- Leave No Trace: 44.44%
- Sea Kayaking: 52.78%
- Canoeing: 55.56%
- Rafting: 55.56%
- Caving: 55.56%
- Whitewater kayaking: 63.89%
- Climbing: 66.67%
- Backpacking: 75.00%
Q6. OP was welcoming when I first started the IDP process.

- Neutral: 2.86
- Agree: 40
- Strongly Agree: 57.14

Q7. The IDP offers a positive learning experience.

- Neutral: 0
- Agree: 31.43
- Strongly Agree: 68.57
Q8 The skills I learn in the IDP program help me in my everyday life.

- Disagree: 2.86
- Neutral: 5.71
- Agree: 45.71
- Strongly Agree: 45.71

Q9 As an apprentice, I received adequate opportunities to lead trips.

- Disagree: 21.43
- Neutral: 57.14
- Agree: 7.14
- Strongly Agree: 14.29
**Q10** As an apprentice, I had adequate opportunities to develop professionally.

- Disagree: 7.14%
- Neutral: 42.86%
- Agree: 28.57%
- Strongly Agree: 21.43%

**Q11** As an apprentice, I saw the trip leaders as mentors.

- Disagree: 7.14%
- Neutral: 14.29%
- Agree: 42.86%
- Strongly Agree: 35.71%
Q12 The IDP program prepared me to lead trips as an instructor.

- Disagree: 0%
- Neutral: 30.77%
- Agree: 46.15%
- Strongly Agree: 23.08%
Q13 As an instructor, I felt confident training apprentices.
Q14 After completing the IDP program, I feel dedicated to participating in Outdoor Programs (Leading)

- Disagree: 0
- Neutral: 25
- Agree: 33.33
- Strongly Agree: 41.67

Q15 Did the Foundations classes heighten your interest in the IDP program?

Answered: 34   Skipped: 2

- Yes: 94.12%
- No: 5.88%
Q19 What is your major and minor?

- Other: 18
- Sustainable Development: 3
- Biology: 2
- Psychology: 3
- Recreation Management: 9

Q21 What is your gender?

- Female: 50.00%
- Male: 50.00%
- Prefer not to answer: 0%
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Conclusions
Outdoor Programs’ mission is, “to promote discovery through student-powered adventure”. Through the Instructor Development Program, they help students empower themselves to achieve these goals. In 2007, the Instructor Development Program was created to help train students and give them opportunities to gain new skills. Outdoor Programs incorporates the principles of diversity, adventure, education and development into their programs.

Results of this study provided Appalachian State Outdoor Programs valuable information about their Instructor Development Program, which trains students to work for Outdoor Programs as trip leaders in a number of outdoor disciplines. The study provides Outdoor Programs with better insight to which skills students are looking to take away from the experience. Results also reflect the sense of community at Outdoor Programs, and how students feel as new members of the community. Survey results make it clear participants are looking for more opportunities to lead trips, and have more hands on experience provided by Outdoor Programs.

As apprentices, students felt they would have liked more opportunities to develop professionally. There are a lot of expectations as students move from the apprentice position to a trip leader. Apprentices expressed that they didn’t have enough time to meet the skills expected of a trip leader. Outdoor Programs could offer more clinics during the week to accommodate apprentices schedule. Trips specifically for apprentices could be designed to kick start their skill development and help them transition into the trip leader position.

During the apprentice stage, students felt that they didn’t have adequate opportunities to lead trips. Students voiced concerns about not having enough experience to feel comfortable leading trips. Outdoor Programs could offer more trips that put apprentices in leadership
Instructor Development Program Evaluation

positions in order to get them more experience. Offering specific Instructor Development Trips would be helpful for students to meet other apprentices and also build their skills together.

Some instructors that participated in the survey voiced concerns about not feeling confident while training their apprentices. This could be a direct correlation to why apprentices thought they weren’t acquiring the required skills to become a trip leader. Outdoor Programs could institute clinics for instructors, focusing on helping them to more efficiently train apprentices.

By evaluating their Instructor Development Program, Appalachian State Outdoor Programs is committed to improving the program. Through surveying participants, Outdoor Programs is collecting valuable insight from students who have completed several different levels of the Instructor Development Program. After looking at the results from the surveys, Outdoor Programs will be able to move forward with the IDP and be able to fine-tune the program for continued success.

**Recommendations**

The study results indicate that Outdoor Programs should focus more on the foundations, essentials and apprentice levels of the Instructor Development Program. Focusing on these introductory levels will help the participation rate stay constant throughout the program. Including more trips for apprentices will also help improve the retention rate of participants in the program. The Instructor Development Program will also benefit from training instructors on how to train apprentices. Results from the survey conclude the activities the students are most interested in, allowing Outdoor Programs to focus on improving those programs. Lastly, Outdoor Programs will benefit from continuing to administer this survey in the future.
References


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Appendices

Outdoor Programs IDP

The purpose of this survey is to evaluate the Instructor Development Program through Appalachian State Outdoor Programs. This study will help gather information on the participants in the IDP program. The information from this study will also give Outdoor Programs valuable feedback on program effectiveness to help better shape the future of the program.

This survey is being conducted by John Ribes, Phil Harris, and Daniel Delay as a part of the Evaluation of Leisure Services class at Appalachian State University. All three of us are Recreation Management majors, and have participated at different levels the Instructor Development Program.

Data collected from this survey will be used for an undergraduate class report. Participation in this survey is voluntary. Your answers are completely anonymous and your name will not be included on the survey form or in the report of the results. If you have any questions or comments about this survey, please contact John Ribes at ribesj@appstate.edu, Phil Harris at harrisp@appstate.edu, Daniel Delay at delayd@appstate.edu, or our faculty advisor, Iryna Sharaievska at sharaievskai@appstate.edu.

1. What time constraints do you have during the school year? (Check all that apply)
   - Class
   - Clubs
   - Work
   - Volunteer service
   - Intramural/Club sports
   - Other

   Other (please specify)

2. Were you a participant on an Outdoor Programs trip before enrolling in the IDP?
   - Yes
   - No
3. Why did you choose to participate in the IDP? (Check all that apply)

- Resume builder
- Social outlet
- Develop technical skills
- Develop leadership skills
- Have fun
- Work with Outdoor Programs
- Other (please specify)

4. Out of the outdoor activities offered by OP, what are you most interested in?

- Backpacking
- Climbing
- Canoeing
- Rafting
- Day hikes
- Outdoor cooking
- Wilderness medicine
- Leave No Trace
- Caving
- Fly fishing
- Whitewater kayaking
- Sea Kayaking
- Other (please specify)

5. Where are you in the IDP process?

- Foundations
- Essentials
- Apprentice
- Leader
### Outdoor Programs IDP

For the following questions, please chose one that reflects your feelings the best.

**6. OP was welcoming when I first started the IDP process.**

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<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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**7. The IDP offers a positive learning experience.**

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**8. The skills I learn in the IDP program help me in my everyday life.**

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If you are currently an instructor, an apprentice or have been either in the past, please answer the following questions. If this does not apply to you, please skip to question 15.

**9. As an apprentice, I received adequate opportunities to lead trips.**

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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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**10. As an apprentice, I had adequate opportunities to develop professionally.**

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**11. As an apprentice, I saw the trip leaders as mentors.**

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**12. The IDP program prepared me to lead trips as an instructor.**

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**13. As an instructor, I felt confident training apprentices.**

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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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**14. After completing the IDP program, I feel dedicated to participating in Outdoor Programs (Leading trips, leading workshops, etc.) If you disagree, why?**

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If you disagree, please briefly explain why:

[Blank space for explanation]
### Outdoor Programs IDP

15. Did the Foundations classes heighten your interest in the IDP program?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

If no, what would have made it more interesting for you?

16. What other activities would you like to see added to the IDP?

17. If you have ideas for changes to the IDP program, what are they?

18. What year are you in school?

- [ ] Freshman
- [ ] Sophomore
- [ ] Junior
- [ ] Senior
- [ ] Graduate student

19. What is your major and minor?

20. What is your age?

21. What is your gender?

- [ ] Female
- [ ] Male
- [ ] Prefer not to answer

Thank you for your participation.