Program Assessment Report
Outdoor Studies: 2013-14

Overview
Outdoor Studies at UAS offers a ten-month Outdoor Skills and Leadership Certificate Program, an Outdoor and Adventure Studies track in the Bachelor of Liberal Arts Program, and an Emphasis area in the BA in Geography/Environmental Studies. In addition to these programs, ODS offers outdoor skills courses available as PE courses to all UAS students.

Enrollment and Graduation Rates
The Outdoor Skills and Leadership Certificate has been in place since 2001. With careful attention, the program has been consistently and steady improved and enrollment has been strong. 16 students were enrolled in the program in 2013. Of those, 12 students were actively meeting with advisors and completing a full course load. The certificate produced 8 graduates in 2012, 8 graduates in 2013, and 4 graduates in the summer and fall of 2014.

The Geography and Environmental Studies Program has been in place since 2010/11. In 2012 the program had 4 students. All 4 students graduated in 2013.

The Outdoor and Adventure Studies BLA was in its first year in 2013-14. It had 4 Students enrolled. One of those students graduated the same year, one will graduate spring 2015, and two are expected to graduate by fall 2015.

The 5-year completion profile for 2013 was 73% (data from institutional research included in 2014 ODS Program Review).

While the numbers above include only ODS students, it is important to remember that nearly all ODS courses are stacked with PE courses in order to serve a wider group of students and community members. As well, for risk management concerns many courses are limited to 12 students. According to data for 2013 from institutional research (included in the 2014 ODS Program Review) the average class size for ODS courses taught by full-time faculty is 12.8 and the average class size for courses taught by adjuncts is 12. Almost all ODS Courses are at, or very close to enrollment capacity.

It is worth noting a possible enrollment trend. In 2013 there were 23 students enrolled in ODS programs, 16 in the certificate and 7 in the four-year options. Currently, the total program enrollment is 30, but while 7 are enrolled in the certificate, 22 students are enrolled in four-year options (14 in the BLA and 8 in the Geography Emphasis). While we expect certificate enrollment to remain steady, we expect that growth in the four-year options will continue. The certificate program continues to be one way that the program attracts full-time upper division students who would not otherwise attend UAS.
Assessment Methods

Exit Interviews

We conducted exit interviews with graduating certificate students on Capstone course. Students were asked to reflect on their goals coming into the program, what they felt the best part of the program was for them, and what changes they recommended for the program. Student responses yielded the following:

All students felt that the program met or exceeded their expectations and that they acquired the skills that they wanted coming into the program. Three students commented that they “Loved the program” and one commented that it was “The best year of my life.” Students are clearly very satisfied with the program in general.

In the students’ view the best part of the program was the time spent in the mountains developing skills and increasing their level of comfort. Several students reported that they valued the closeness of the group, and the intensity of the program. The students also reported that the mountaineering outing was the best part of the program. Some students also commented that they were surprised at how much they learned through ODS academic courses.

Students also recommended some changes to the program: Two students recommended changing the Mountain Adventure course to include longer outings. One student recommended a backcountry cooking class. Students in the 2012-13 cohort recommended being more selective in the admission process and only admitting students who were very serious about the program. None of the students in the 2013-14 cohort made similar comments, though two suggested working on physical training plans with students during the fall term and increasing the intensity of some of the courses.

Summary of Instructor Reports from Certificate Capstone Course

Students in the Certificate Capstone are assessed on professional behavior (preparedness, leadership, confidence and composure in field environments), hard skills (technical proficiency in a variety of discipline specific activities), soft skills (critical thinking, decision making, communication, and judgment), and ability to apply academic concepts to capstone activities. In each category, students are rated on a 1-5 scale (5 indicating excellence, 3 meets expectations, and 1 unacceptable) and the instructor indicates noted improvement or decline in student performance throughout the program.

In Professional Behavior the student average was 3.8 and 40% of the students had shown significant improvement over the course of the program.
In Hard Skills the student average was 4.4 and 80% of the students had shown significant improvement over the course of the program.

In Soft Skills the student average was 3.8 and 60% of the students had shown significant improvement over the course of the program.

In Application of Academic Concepts the student average was 3.8 and all students had shown significant improvement over the course of the program.

In response to the above evaluations, we have determined that we should work to give students more feedback throughout the course of the program in the areas of professional behavior and soft skills.

**Faculty Meetings**

Faculty meetings resulted in decisions to make the following changes to the program:

1. The decision was made to change the degree capstone course to a required major field expedition. The reason for this is that, while it is important for students to participate in a major expedition as part of their program, four-year ODS students in the BLA and Geography degrees must complete separate capstone courses. We feel that it is a better program flow for more students if they can complete their major expedition course on a more flexible schedule, especially at the current time when the course is only offered every other year.

2. We decided to allow certificate students to complete the major expedition course in place of the Outdoor Leadership Capstone course if it is appropriate (based on their interest and skill level as determined by full-time ODS faculty). Students enter the certificate program with differing levels of experience and skills.

3. In response to student and instructor recommendations, we decided to return to our previous model of having the Mountain Adventure class meet for field outings and classroom sessions in the same day as do our outdoor leadership classes.

4. Looking at enrollments the past few times it was offered and at Kevin Krein's teaching schedule, we have decided to temporarily remove ODS 148 - Backcountry Skiing from the 6-year sequence. We will continue to consider removing both from catalogue during 2015-16.

5. Remove ODS 233 - Expedition Sea Kayaking from the 6-year sequence. We will continue to consider removing both from catalogue during 2015-16.
6. We will revise ODS 134 – Whitewater Kayaking to focus the course on packrafting. Curriculum changes to this effect are in process.

7. We also noted that we have been regularly placing 4-year program students in internship and practicum positions, and have decided to work to continue to develop further opportunities for students along these lines.

8. Finally, we decided to revise our assessment plan and to include in it rubrics to provide more consistent assessment of students in the certificate capstone and major expedition courses in the future.

Student Tracking


Anna Gutschi – Certificate 2014: Completing Recreation Degree, University of Graz, Austria.


Alex Botehlo – Certificate 2013: Currently finishing Geography/Environmental Studies BA (expected graduation spring 2015), Going to Summer Intership at Kensington Mine.

Samantha Becker – BA Geography 2012: Tower Coordinator, AK Department of Fish and Game, and ODS Instructor, University of Alaska Southeast.


Freddie Munoz – BA Geography 2012: Field Technician, AK Department of Fish and Game, Yakatat, AK.


Sarah Bogert – Certificate 2012: EMT, Salt Lake City, Utah.


Nicole Tarcsay – Certificate 2011: Guide - Living Adventure Inc. (Bayfield, WI), Ski Patroler, Bruce Mound Winter Sports Area.


Kyle Thompson – Certificate 2011: Bartender – 7 Glaciers Restaurant, Girdwood and skis every day.

Travis Haskin – Certificate 2010: Guide - Above and Beyond Alaska (Juneau, AK).


Sam Braband – Certificate 2008: Outdoor Recreation Manager - UAF (Fairbanks, AK).


Christopher Benke – Certificate 2008: Ph.D. Candidate, RAP Program UAF.

Current ODS Students

Outdoor Skills and Leadership Certificate (with expected graduation term):

Keith Andrews, S15
Naomi Beck-Goodell, S15
Ryan Cortes, S15
Rita Hartinger, S15
Jason Rupp, S17
Nick Svinicki, S15
Elliot Sofhauser, S16

BLA – Designated Emphasis Outdoor and Adventure Studies:

Chelsea Bomba, F16
Casey Burkert, S18
Brad Chadsey, F15 (ODS focused Independent Design)
Katie McCaffrey, S19
Miles Gayton (ODS focused Independent Design), S15
Tedmund Hanrahan, S17
Alexa Hooley (Currently Listed in Certificate), S18
JD Miller (ODS focused Independent Design), F15
Genevieve Miles, graduates S17
Padraig New, graduates, S17
Makaila Olson, S17
Ariel Svetlik-McCarthy, S16
Nathan Wiley, F15
Anitra Winkler, S16

BA Geography and Environmental Studies, ODS Emphasis:

Zack Fisher, S18
Sara Gering, S17
Emma Lydan, S17
Dylan Miller, graduates S17
Michael New, S17
Brittany Ooman, S19
Torrey Weibe, S18
Quinton Woolman-Morgan, S19