

2010 Associated Students

Outback Program

AS Structure and Program Advisory Committee

Triennial Assessment Program
Evaluation Report



Introduction:

The Outback presented to the AS Structure and Program advisory Committee on January 21st, 2010. The currently approved statement of purpose for the outback is:

The Outback is both an Outdoor Experiential Learning Program (OELP) and a community that facilitates personal and collaborative events, projects, and academic partnerships. The Outback OELP serves as a demonstration site for sustainability and best use practices. The Outback OELP offers the campus community a unique natural environment for meetings and small events.

The outback is one of the newest programs of the Associated Students and has expanded exponentially throughout the past couple of years. This growth has been a direct result of the resources provided by both the Associated Students and Fairhaven College. The property that the outback is located on is provided by Fairhaven. In addition, the provost has also provided the outback a yearly budget of approximately \$5,000 which they have used to transform the Outback into a viable program in terms of infrastructure. The Associated Students currently provides support through a salaried employee and some additional dollars for supplies. The AS Board of Directors has also provided one-time capital funding for projects in the Outback.

Program/Services Provided:

During the assessment process the Outback developed several Student Learning/Experience Outcomes. As a result of the programming and/or services of the OELP Outback farm, students will:

- Learn about and grow organic produce using our garden plots, tools, organic soil amendments and gardening instruction-- all free of charge
- Learn small-scale organic food production methods through experiential learning, workshops and classes
- Participate in ecological restoration projects
- Build infrastructure using green construction techniques
- Access experts and leaders in sustainability through workshops, lectures, and films
- Develop leadership and community organizing skills
- Engage in a rich community centered around sustainable practices

The Outback has provided a variety of programs and services for students which include but have not been limited to:

- ❖ Site development in Outback area for use by students
- ❖ Garden plots used by students, staff, and community members
- ❖ Programs ranging from gardening classes, workshops, films, etc...
- ❖ Providing an academic resource for a variety of departments including Huxley

Areas for Improvements/ Recommendations:

The following are the Structure and Program Advisory committee's recommendations for strategic goals over the next three years:

1. *Work with University Administration to make the Outback's boundaries permanent*

Currently the Outback's boundaries are not established, is not recognized on any official University map. This has the potential to create confusion and disagreement between multiple parties. We strongly recommend that the AS work with the University Administration to set these boundaries to clear up any type of confusions in the future. Until some boundaries have been set and agreed upon ~~major~~AS funded capital projects should be put on hold.

2. *Create an additional Assistant Outback Coordinator*

The program has truly grown beyond the current capacity of simply having one coordinator. It was recommended that the position be four quarter, by the Outback, but this should be further examined depending on the necessity for this position during certain quarters. If this recommendation is not implemented a reduction of services in the Outback should be considered.

3. *Capital Projects budget*

The Outback is in need of dollars to complete capital projects. Very similar to how the provost allocates funds to the Outback the Associated Students should consider creating a capital projects budget for the Outback. Although the funding may not be huge it would help the Outback begin to plan capital projects with stable funding and continue to look for one-time dollar opportunities to continue to build the infrastructure. We recommend that the basic infrastructure development, ~~for such as water~~example water systems and deer fences be prioritized before additional dollars are spent on projects such as the amphitheatre.

4. *Implement the developed Learning/Experience Outcomes*

It is important for these outcomes to be adopted officially by the Associated Students so we can continue to monitor how the outback achieves these outcomes.

5. *Assessment/Evaluation Methods*

The Outback needs to develop a system to track which populations use its services. This will help the Associated Students to provide the necessary resources and ability to benchmark the continuing progression of the program.

6. *Mission Statement*

The Outback has also proposed the new mission statement which we have slightly revised but believe better reflects the Outback and the direction it should continue to go in:

The Outback, a joint program of the Associated Students and Fairhaven College, is a 5 acre farm and wetland restoration site. The purpose of the Outback OELP is to coordinate a wide range of opportunities for students to learn about, develop and implement sustainable land use practices. These opportunities include personal and collaborative events and projects involving habitat restoration, organic gardening, green building, academic partnerships, independent study projects (ISPs), workshops, lectures and classes. The OELP also provides job-related skill building and community networking opportunities for students. These include serving on the Outback Governing Council, volunteering, and participating in work-study, and salaried employment.

Other Considerations/Proposals

1. *Creating a non-student program manager position*

We have identified this as a long-term goal that needs further research. Currently there are several departments revolving around sustainability within the AS, such as the Environmental and Sustainability Programs. If we do invest in a non-student program manager it may be that this person divides their time between the multiple departments including the Outback.

2. *Adding additional dollars for programming*

The Outback has indicated that they would like to see increases into their budget for events and programs. While this may be a good direction, it seems too ambitious to focus on increasing programming and the necessity to keep up with the already demanding work of maintaining the garden and building the infrastructure. This request should be reevaluated after some of the other recommendations have been implemented.